

A
FREE and CANDID
CORRESPONDENCE
ON THE
FARMER'S LETTERS
TO THE
PEOPLE of ENGLAND, &c.

Price TWO SHILLINGS.

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WITH THE AUTHOR,
ARTHUR YOUNG, Esq;

BY THE
Rev. Mr. THOMAS COMBER, A. B.
Rector of Kirkby-Misperton near Malton, Yorkshire, and
Chaplain to the Countess Dowager of BALCARRAS,

TO WHICH IS ADDED
A LETTER on MOOR-IMPROVEMENTS.

———"Corrige, fodes,
"Hoc, ait, ac illud."—— HOR.
——Still finding, as a friend,
Some things to blame, but *many* to commend.

L O N D O N:
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FARMERS' LETTERS

PROFITABLE ENLIGHTENED

WITH THE AUTHOR
ARTHUR YOUNG, Esq.

BY THE
REV. MR. THOMAS COMBER, A.B.

Editor of *Kent's Magazine* near Milton, Yorkshire, and
Chairman to the *General Assembly of the Society of Friends*

TO WHICH IS ADDED
A LETTER on MOOR-IMPROVEMENT.

— "The Knight, born
"and of a noble family."
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L O N D O N

Printed by J. Johnson, Strand, near St. Paul's Church.
— M D C C C X X —

TO THE
FARMER.

Letter the First, on Part of his First Letter.

East Newton, May 28th, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

AGREEABLY to your request that I would make any strictures on your letters, which seem necessary to improve a new edition of them, I have perused them several times, with just attention, I hope, and shall make such reflections on them in writing, as seem likely to answer the proposed end; and to speak with the Poet a little altered,

———“ Still finding, as a friend,
Few things to blame, but many to commend.”

Your assertion, Sir, in page 5th, That
“ if *England* contains 34,000,000 of acres,
“ you have little doubt 15,000,000 of
“ them are waste and uncultivated,” may
be true. I hope it is, because on that sup-
position, we have a prodigious source of
wealth unbroke up. But as the assertion
will seem improbable to great numbers of
your readers, and may prejudice them

B

against

against many of your subsequent assertions, I advise you for the sake of the good cause in which you are engaged, to lay before your readers either in the text, or rather in a note, the grounds on which you entertain little doubt of this fact.

To the objection in page 6th, That " the
 " greatest part of the land you call *waste*,
 " is of more use to the public in maintain-
 " ing sheep, and numbers of people in
 " manufacturing their wool, than if turned
 " into arable," your answers I think *very*
decisive; but there seems to be an allowance which should be made on the other side, *viz.* that the wool of sheep kept on lands ploughed out and improved, is never so fine in quality, and consequently never so high in value as that which is grown on a fine down, and approaches nearest to the *Spanish*; witness that which comes from the hills of *Herefordshire*, &c. You cannot so much misunderstand me, Sir, as to suppose, that I think this allowance at all likely to counterbalance the advantages arising from ploughing out and improving sheep walks. On the contrary, I think this allowance may be trivial on a comparison; and especially if such methods were taken, as I think, effectually might be, always to secure a sufficient quantity of the finest wool. Besides, it is to be considered, that probably the *quantity* of wool grown on a
 given

given quantity of *improved* ground, may overbalance the *quality* on the unimproved.—Besides, few downs are so fine as to give the wool in question.

So that when Mr. *Mills* concludes, from a supposition that the *quality* of *wool* is hurt by the *improvement* of pasture, that such improvement should be *forbidden* by law, he takes in only *one* of *many* considerations; especially as the long wool which is produced on rich pastures is *as necessary*, and *much more valuable* than the *short* and *fine*. How unfit is he, Sir, to compile a system of agriculture, who has views thus confined! when in page 8. “you bid
“the reader deduct the expences, and
“make the comparison betwixt the *profit*
“of the *unimproved* and the *improved* sheep
“walk,” you would much more effectually answer your end in view, if you did it in a note, as many readers want pen, pencil, &c. and even the knowledge of the real value of the sheep feed.—On the article of expence in improvement, mentioned in the same page, you would do well, once for all, to admonish the reader, that he is to consider it as a *sunk capital*, and consequently to make a just deduction for it from his profit.—You state, Sir, in the same page, the expence of *marling* or *claying* an acre at about 3 *l*. This account may be very just, and, I dare say, it is verified by the best ex-

perience you could gain. It seems, however, pretty high, especially as the manure is produced by the soil on which it is to be laid, and consequently, the expence of leading must be light.—It seems, however, advisable, that you should give your readers the particulars of the expence, that they may make proper allowances for the difference of the price of labour in their respective situations. But whatever, Sir, be the expence of *marling* and *claying*, I think you will not do justice to your argument, if you don't advertise your readers, that many of them may improve their sheep walks at a cheaper rate, *viz.* where they are near *limestone*, and either coals, wood, or furze, and the soil is not of a nature too hot for lime.—Four chaldrons will generally be a full manuring for an acre for three crops; and lime in favourable situations may generally be burnt and led for 7*s.* 6*d.* *per* chaldron; so that the expence of *liming* will be only half of that of *marling* or *claying*.——The position of the *truly ingenious* and *reverend* Author of the *Essays on Husbandry*, *viz.* that “the vent of one million
 “worth of things *produced* and manufac-
 “tured at home and then exported, is
 “more real gain to the nation than the
 “vent of three millions of things pur-
 “chased abroad, manufactured here, and
 “then exported,” seems *well grounded*,
 “and

and *judiciously applied* by you in page 15th and 16th to encourage all imaginable attention to the increase of our culture of corn; and so is your reflection (p. 15.) on the difference of stability betwixt a commerce founded on the *necessaries*, and another founded only on the *superfluities* of life.

Nothing, Sir, can be more just than your reflection, (p. 16.) that an *increase* of *culture of corn* will be attended with a *falling of the price*; and that with a *permanency of commerce* in that article with foreign nations;—and that a *reasonable* dependance on us for a *constant* supply of corn, will be a very likely means to prevent many countries in *Europe* growing for themselves and even for others.

Your comparison, Sir, in page 18. and 19. of the more regular industry and support which labourers in agriculture may be expected to exercise and experience than labourers in manufactures is very just; and in support of your argument and cause you might have proceeded to observe, that the *riots* of manufacturers, so detrimental to the trade and peace of the nation, seem not likely to be so effectually prevented as by an increase of the growth of corn, which alone will enable them to have *bread enough* for their *honest labour*.

You enter, dear Sir, on a *very nice point*, which seems to me to need *great distinction*,
when

when you assert, (p. 29.) that “ enabling
 “ our manufacturers to sell their goods
 “ cheap to foreigners—*ceases* to be a *wise*
 “ *measure*, on supposition of its being ef-
 “ fected by cramping the sale of the pro-
 “ duce of our lands: *because more* than we
 “ gain by one measure, we lose by the
 “ other.” I must own, Sir, I don’t see the
 force of this reason, or rather the truth of
 the fact here alledged.—I view this mat-
 ter in the following light.—Cramping the
 sale of the produce of our lands is a check
 on the industry of the producers: but the
 cultivation of the earth is so natural an em-
 ployment, to which vast multitudes are
 inured, who can do nothing else, that I am
 persuaded, a temporary cramping the sale
 of the productions of the earth, will have
 little or no ill effect, if it be exercised only
 in *necessary* or *very expedient* cases: whereas
 the not affording our manufacturers bread
 at such a rate, that they may be able to sell
 their goods as cheap as others to foreigners,
 is *immediately* and *lastingly* (for commerce
 leaving a channel seldom returns) destruc-
 tive to the masters and labourers in those
 manufactures, probably to the merchants
 who convey the goods to foreign markets,
 and very pernicious to the public, if the
 manufactures be beneficial to it.---So that,
 in my opinion, *great distinction*, as I
 said above, is to be made; and I think we
 should

should conclude, that in *many* cases we shall lose much more by not affording our manufacturers bread cheap, than by cramping a *free* sale of corn.

Nothing can be more reasonable, Sir, than what you observe in p. 20. *viz.* that “ constant experience evinces, that whatever “ increases the sale of a production, like- “ wise increases the quantity of it;” and I will willingly subscribe to your conclusion, *viz.* “ therefore if we would have bread “ cheap for our manufacturers, we should “ suffer the exportation of corn to be *con-* “ *stant* and unobstructed.” If you will allow me to add, what seems a necessary restriction, *viz.* “ except in cases where “ the dearth of corn requires an embargo “ for the support of our best and dearest “ interests.”

And here Sir, give me leave to enquire, how far an embargo on exportation of corn laid by a wise magistrate in the exigency of affairs, can be justly called “ a cramping “ the sale of the produce of the earth ?”--- I really think scarce at all; for the wise magistrate will never lay this embargo, except in cases when the price of corn is *either actually* or in *almost certain prospect* such, that the crop is not likely to be *more than sufficient* for the domestic consumption. In such a case, the price is such as the grower of corn cannot *reasonably* complain of; and the

the only question is, whether it be reasonable to send out our own *best corn* to foreigners, and import *worse* at an *higher* price, or to give the grower of corn a reasonable, perhaps a very high price for the maintainance of his brethren, the manufacturers, and artificers, with whom he is embarked in the same common bottom of government, and without whom he cannot subsist?—Or, in other words, since the importation of corn is always expensive, subject to various frauds, and frequently so uncertain that it cannot be depended on, the question is, whether ought we to permit exportation, and depend on importation, which may occasion the *beggary*, nay, *death* of many useful manufacturers; or we should insist upon the grower of corn's letting *Englishmen* be supplied with the produce of the *English* soil?—If any man thinks, that in order to encourage cultivation of the earth, we should *never* in *any degree* cramp the sale of its produce, he must maintain, to be consistent with himself not only that we should *always* *suffer* *exportation*, but also that we should *never* *suffer* *importation*; and I am sure, that a man of half your penetration, Sir, must see that this would amount to an *interdiction of bread* to multitudes, equally fatal with that celebrated one of the *Romans*, "*ab igni et aqua*," viz. "fire and water."

In the main point, dear Sir, I intirely agree with you, *viz.* that it is a shame to *England*, which has so many millions of barren acres, to waste such a quantity of corn as might keep its *price* at a *proper* rate, (see your 17th page.) which at the same time would allow our manufacturers bread enough for their sober industry, and a *full, free* and *profitable* exportation without any bounty. All this is spoke with proper reverence to providence, which can bring on the human race a famine, notwithstanding all industry! but, humanly speaking, we might prevent not only famine, but any approaches to want of fullness of bread.——In the mean time, Sir, till your salutary measures (which you with a truly patriotic spirit advise) are put into vigorous execution, our country will, I fear, often want an embargo, and seldom allow of a bounty on exportation.

With just modesty, Sir, you observe, (p. 20.) that “ you cannot *precisely* assert, what proportion the number of hands employed in “ working up our *own* productions (for these “ are your *first* class) bears to the number “ *necessary* to *complete* our cultivation.” And indeed, I think, any man must be so far from the utility of determining this point *precisely*, that he cannot even determine it in a rough and general sketch.——But in another point, I must, Sir, be allowed to dissent from you, unless you have committed an oversight, and think differently from your expression. You
C say,

say, " You have *reason sufficient* to believe,
 " that if they were *all* employed towards
 " perfecting such cultivation, their labour
 " would be attended with an *infinitely greater*
 " benefit to the public." p. 20. Is it possible,
 Sir, that a man of your sagacity can think,
 that if all our tanners, tawers, curriers, shoe-
 makers, fadlers, all manufacturers in the
 woollen trade, chandlers, &c. were to turn
 ploughmen, the nation would be *infinitely be-*
nefited by the change?—It is not; you must
 mean, that if your *latter class* of manufactur-
 ers, those employed in working up *foreign*
 productions, were thus converted to plough-
 men, we should profit by the change.

Your remark, Sir, that we have lost the
 trade to *France* for cloth, and that it is de-
 clining in *many other* places, (to which I may
 add, that the last advices from *Portugal* in
 this respect are very justly alarming) justifies
 the great propriety of your advice to your
 countrymen to cultivate more arable grounds
 in order to extend our sale of corn, likely to
 be a much more stable branch of commerce.

And now, dear Sir, finding that this paper
 is not likely with convenience to hold the re-
 maining reflections which the residue of your
 first excellent letter may suggest, I will break
 off with an assurance that I am to you as a
 friend to your country, an obedient and
 obliged humble servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

P. S.

P. S. I doubt not, Sir, but your Farmers Letters will be *as extensively* (and much more *justly* and *lastingly* famous) as Dr. Swift's *Draper's Letters*.

P. P. S. It is supposed, that increasing our tillage must *infallibly* decrease the quantity of our cattle bred. But this is most evidently a *great* mistake; for the quantity of *corn*, and consequently *straw* increased by additional tillage, may be such, that even more cattle may be maintained by the land *ploughed out* than when *untilled*. So much pasture indeed must remain as to keep the cattle lean in summer; but a corn country, affords such keeping in winter as grazing farms cannot compare with in point of *cheapness* and *plenty*; and when the cattle arrive at a fit age for feeding, they are sold off for grazing countries. And since, Sir, you and I are no advocates for ploughing out rich countries, but inclosing and ploughing barren moors, downs, &c. there must on our plan be an increase of cattle.

To the FARMER.

A Second Letter, on the latter Part of his First Letter.

Dear Sir,

THE conclusion which the judicious Author of the *Essays on Husbandry* makes, (p. 179.) from a detail of the bad policy of

Colbert, viz. " that the cultivation of the " earth ought not to be superseded by a passion for commerce," is well founded. But I must own, I think, that the parenthesis in that quotation from Mr. *Harte*, which you have printed (p. 24.) in *Italics*, viz. that "*Colbert*, hoarded up great quantities of provisions principally by obstructing the free vent and exportation of corn," seems to afford no argument against an occasional embargo, in cases of exigence. Two clear reasons may be assigned, why an embargo on exportation of corn might be bad policy in *Colbert*, and not so in the present ministry of *England*.—First, *Colbert* hoarded up provisions to support work folks in various articles of luxury in expectation that the vending these would enrich the *French*; whereas, " part, (a very considerable one) of the folly stuck at home, and became infectious." Secondly, *Colbert* took not proper care to encourage the culture of the earth. Hence *famine* succeeded. *Colbert's* false policy, therefore, consisted in employing the fruits of the earth to the support of pernicious manufacturers, and not providing for a supply of those fruits by premiums, &c. But it may be, and is true policy in us, to keep at home corn necessary to the support of our most necessary manufacturers.

You now, dear Sir, (in p. 26.) enter upon a new point of considerable nicety, and venture to assert, " That the lowering the price

“ price of provisions is of *no use* to our manufactures.” This, is a very important subject, and the principles upon which you go are *undoubtedly true*, and yet I must dissent from your conclusions, because I think it *most evident*, that you carry them *too far*.——The instance of the *Dutchman*, who pays nearly one third of his earnings in taxes, while the *Englishman* pays not above one tenth; and the former’s paying nearly three times as much for his bread and flesh as the latter does, is very striking; as is that of the *Frenchman*, whose bread is often *six times* above its average, and whose pay is three times as little as the *Englishman’s*. Now, if we admit these facts, and that the *Dutch* and *French* undersell us in *all* markets, it seems no *fair conclusion*, that we should not *lower*, if we can, the price of bread to our useful manufacturers.——It is amazing how much may be done by *industry* and *frugality*; and the *Dutch* and *French* are remarkable instances of the effects of these two virtues; and I will proceed so far with you, as to acknowledge, that a considerable degree of both *industry* and *frugality* seems *necessary* to preserve the happiness of the human species, and especially of the lower classes, who are not blest with an education which enables them to make a good use of *leisure* and *plenty*. But must we thence conclude, that there is *no medium* betwixt *slavery* and *idleness*, betwixt *starving* and *luxury*?——If there is such a
medium

medium, in this the happiness of *individuals* and *society* will but subsist. The exigencies of government must be complied with as far as the rights of *human nature* will permit; and to these, much of the *ease* and *enjoyment* of life may and ought frequently to be sacrificed. But then we ought to consider on the other hand, how much of men's patience, under *severe labour* and *hard keeping*, is owing to education, habit, manners, customs, laws, examples, *religious opinions*, nay, and even *bodily constitutions*. And we might as well argue, that a *London dray-horse* may do his labour with the short allowance of an *Highland Galloway*, as that an Englishman can follow many of his laborious works with the *garlick* of a *Dutchman*, and the *soup maigre* of a *Frenchman*, which effectually enable them to make their toys and trinkets.

All the excellent authors to whom you refer, Sir, in the note at the bottom of p. 29, only assert, that "provisions must be rendered *so dear* as to *enforce general industry*;" that "Trade can never be *greatly extended*" where the *necessaries of life* are *very cheap*;" that "Commerce seldom flourishes in a *fertile, illpeopled* country; because *provisions* are *cheap* and *labour dear*;" and lastly, "that high taxes promote *invention, industry* and *frugality*:"—Now, Sir, all this being allowed, as it ought to be, must we conclude, that *lowering* of the *price* of *provisions* will not frequently *promote* manufactures? or that
beigh-

heightening that price will not frequently be *absolutely fatal*, and speedily too, to manufactures?—Certainly no.—Any person who argues thus, talks like the horse-master who reduced his mare to the perfection of living on an oat *per* day:—But then she died.—

In short, Sir, the price of provisions, corn, flesh, &c. is then as high as it ought to be, when the wages of the sober manufacturer's constant labour will supply him and his family with the necessary comforts of life; and his wages are then as high as they ought to be, when they allow the merchant to cope with rivals at a foreign market.—The proverb, "Hunger breaks through stone-walls," will always be verified:—and he whose wages cannot support him, will either on one side become a private stealer, house-breaker, or rioter; or on the other side (which is really the case) depend on accidental charity, and famish; or if he can, run into debt, and rot in a jail.—

And now, Sir, I come to your conclusions. How far I assent to them, you pretty well know. I heartily assent to the 1st and 2d, viz. that "Agriculture is the *true source* of "all a nation's wealth;" and that "it is our "*first* and *most important* business to advance "the culture of the *whole kingdom* of Eng- "*land* to the highest perfection." As to the 3d, viz. that "no encouragement should be "given to *increase the number* of manufac-
"turers

“ turers in any branch;” I cannot give my assent without some restrictions; 1st, because several manufactures are *essential* to the well-being of the nation, and if not encouraged might be *irretrievably* lost, and are *always* re-established with great difficulty and expence, and scarce ever so well as formerly; 2dly, because the revenues arising from them are necessary to the support of government, and could hardly be replaced by others; and 3dly, because the foundations of them, the materials, being the productions of the earth, are in so essential connection with agriculture, that they must *stand* or fall with it.

And here, Sir, I must observe, that when two things are compared together, one may appear *more important* than the other; so that if we were necessitated to part with one, we may easily discern which we ought to part with; and yet these two things may be so connected, that they cannot well subsist the one without the other, and there may be nothing like a necessity of keeping one to establish the other; and it may be very *impolitic* and irrational to say, that because one is *more important*, therefore the other *must* be *destroyed*.

Permit me, dear Sir, to be a little more particular in the application.—So great a work as reducing the whole land of the kingdom to the highest perfection of culture, must on necessity be a *slow* one. Perhaps it is not very desirable that it should be extremely

tremely rapid. The expence of great undertakings is *almost immense*; the price of every article of labour, &c. is raised by a great demand. Great errors are committed in hurries; whereas, on the contrary, gradual attempts, such as are at present generally made, open avenues for improvements in every branch, and give time for *experiments* and *deduction of uses* from them. The ploughing out too great a quantity of land at once, without taking time to lay some other tracts with improvements in grass, &c. might produce such a quantity of corn, as would be beyond the demand, and instead of rewarding, impoverish the producers.

As to your last conclusion, Sir, viz. that “ it is *most highly impolitic* in any degree or manner, or on any supposition, to obstruct exportation of corn,” I have given such reasons, as will at least excuse the dissent of, your obedient and obliged humble servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

East Newton, May 29th 1767.

P. S. One material observation, which militates strongly against your opinion, that “ the bounty on exportation of corn lowers the price,” is, that the price was *actually* raised for some years immediately after the bounty, as appears by your own table; whereas, if this measure had the effect you apprehend, it should have had it *immediately*; as men are most sanguine in the pursuit of new measures.

To the F A R M E R.

A Third Letter, on the Subject of his Second.

Dear Sir,

IN your second Letter, you confine yourself to what you justly call that great “foundation of diversity of opinion, the exportation of corn.” On a subject, which is allowed by you to be the foundation of such great diversity of opinion, much mutual candour will be *required*, even in this friendly epistolary correspondence, and, I dare say, *given* by us; especially as we agree in the main point, *viz.* that a *full, free, and regular*, even a *constant* exportation is much to be wished for, and endeavoured after; and, I may add, may easily (under providence) be secured, by *national attention and diligence*.—I further, Sir, agree with you, that the *prospect* of exportation has a *natural tendency* to increase our culture, and the quantity of corn grown; and again, this *increased quantity* has the same natural tendency to decrease the price of corn.

But now, Sir, comes the point to be discussed, (and to your conclusion, on which I cannot assent) *viz.* “Whether exportation of corn has *actually* decreased the price in the proportion assigned by you and many
“ pre-

“ preceding writers ?” And *however clear* the facts on which you build your conclusions may appear to yourselves, after the *most impartial* and *most attentive* consideration, which I can give the subject, they appear to me, not to authorise such conclusions. Nay, I assure you, I am really in doubt whether exportation has on the balance contributed in *any* proportion to decrease the price of corn.

The table shewing the mean price of wheat at WINDSOR market, at several periods for 169 years, is adduced, to make it evident, that wheat has been cheaper the last 75 years since the bounty commenced, than it was for 94 years before; that for the first 69 years, the price was *continually* rising, and since the bounty, *continually* sinking; and that the sinking of the price in the 25 years immediately preceding the bounty, is to be ascribed to the imposition of three duties on importation, almost amounting to a prohibition, which has the same effect as exportation. See p. 36, 37, 38. I have, I hope, dear Sir, with all possible *impartiality*, *conciseness*, and *clearness*, given your first facts and conclusions; and I should not controvert these conclusions, did they not appear as clearly to me to be *ungrounded*, as they can to you to be *well-grounded*.

But by another table of the 14 highest annual prices of wheat *before* the bounty, on one side, and 14 of the highest *since*, on the

other side ; you conclude that the price in *some particular years since* the bounty, is not raised by exportation to a height *unknown* before. See p. 38 and 39.—This conclusion also, I cannot admit.—What follows, however, I have the pleasure of agreeing with you intirely in, *viz.* “ that the foregoing prices “ do not discover the *real sinking* of that of “ wheat, unless we deduct from every year “ the proportion of the rise of the price of “ other things.” See p. 39.

But let us now, my good friend, examine how the *conclusions* to be discussed, flow from the *premised facts* : “ The price of wheat on “ an average has been *continually sinking*, and “ *very considerably* too, since the bounty on “ exportation was given: THEREFORE that “ *continual* and *very considerable* sinking of “ price, is to be ascribed, not only *partly*, or “ *even chiefly*, but *solely* to exportation.” There is perhaps no species of *delusive* reasoning, dear Sir, *more amazing* and yet *more common* than that which ascribes *effects* which flow from *many causes*, to *one*. This happens to strike the observer, and *engrosses* his attention so much, that he *overlooks* and *gradually forgets* every one else. This seems very clearly to me the case in the present point. A reduction in the price of any commodity, when the consumers are not diminished, is *naturally* to be ascribed to the increased plenty of that commodity. And this seems evidently the case with respect to the reduced price of corn.

But

But then comes the question, "To what causes
 " is that increased plenty to be ascribed?"—
 " A *lively demand* and *quick sale* encourages
 " the cultivator to proceed in his business with
 " spirit and alacrity." (See p. 43, 44. of
 your letter.) The prospect of your exportation
 seems to promise a *lively demand* and *quick
 sale*; and *therefore* may justly be supposed
one cause of the *increased plenty*. But must we
 conclude it therefore the *sole* one? Surely,
 no.—How many others may justly be as-
 signed! I will enumerate but a *few*, yet *striking*
ones; viz. the visible increase of people
 at home, the flourishing of commerce both
domestic and *foreign*; the improvements in
 arts; and especially the advances made in the
 knowledge of cultivation of the earth; the
 necessity of improving estates by the advance
 of all the articles of life to landlords, and of
 rents to tenants; long continued peace at
 home; improvements of the edifice of free-
 dom.—*All these* (and probably many more)
 may, my dear Sir, be justly added as *clear*,
strong, *striking* and *lasting* causes of the in-
 crease of the productions of the earth, and
 corn *in particular*; and if I had not seen many
 others under the *same inattention*, I should be
 perfectly amazed that a gentleman of half
 your penetration could overlook all, or even
any of these, while the exportation of corn, as
 the *sole cause* of *plenty*, attacks and engrosses
 his regard.—Give me leave, dear Sir, here
 to examine *how considerable* a cause of in-
 creased

creased plenty exportation may be, since it is far from being the *sole*. In the first place, the continuance of the bounty on exportation always was *uncertain*; nay, the continuance of the *leave* of exportation even *without a bounty*, was always uncertain too. Again—the advantage arising from exportation to the grower of corn, in any considerable degree, seems confined to cultivators in the neighbourhood of sea-ports; a set of men, who, though considerable in themselves, bear no very great proportion to the whole numbers of corn-growers, in too inland a situation to make exportation of their corn at the expence of land carriage, an advantageous scheme. The hazards also of bankrupts among the corn-dealers in sea-ports (where the trade is *often* not for ready money as at markets) must be considered as a great deduction from the strength of the motive to cultivation of corn arising from exportation.—Other drawbacks on this subject, might probably with justice be added; but from what has been already advanced, it must, Sir, appear, that exportation of corn is far from being too considerable a cause of the increased plenty of it, as might be at first imagined by the *inattentive*, the *injudicious*, or the *partial* examiner. Yet I should not do justice to my *argument*, or to *truth* and *public utility*, if I added not one consideration, which appears to me *very clear* and *very strong*. If the exportation, with *all* its advantages of a bounty, has in fact only carried

carried out *one bushel* of *every* acre of wheat *annually*, (see p. 40.) and that subject to charges and hazards of payment to the grower ; how can we reasonably suppose the *prospect* of such an event to have been any considerable cause of the increased plenty of corn ?

But, my worthy friend, if the exportation of corn be *really* thus inconsiderable a cause of its *increased plenty*, how much more inconsiderable a cause must it be allowed of the *decreased price*?—For it must be confessed, that if, as a *motive to cultivation*, it increases the *plenty* one way, and lessens the price, as a *vent* it lessens the plenty the other way, and raises the price. We are certain, that its effect in the latter way is very great, so great as frequently to necessitate the magistrate to interpose, and in a late instance, in a manner thought *rather unconstitutional*, but *so expedient*, as to meet with the approbation of, I think, almost all *true* and impartial patriots among a nation jealous of its liberties to excess.—On the whole, the effect one way is *great* and *certain*, on the other *quite uncertain*, and in all probability not very considerable. So that, I think, no impartial man, on this view of the matter, can hesitate to conclude, that exportation is so far from being the *sole cause* of *lowering the price* of corn, that, on the contrary, in all probability it has contributed *considerably to keep it up*.

I said, Sir, towards the beginning of this letter, that I could not admit your conclusion,
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in p. 39. from the tables of highest prices. You have surely a right to my reason. It shall be a *very short* and *very clear* one. It appears, that the two middle numbers of the 14 of the highest prices since the bounty, are 3*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* and that the highest price in the other table is only 3*l.* 16*s.* and that this highest price only occurs once, and is in an earlier *place* with respect to that table, than the highest prices in the latter table are. —I agree with you, Sir, that the sum of *above thirty-three millions*, supposed to be brought into the nation for corn in 68 years, is a noble treasure. I readily allow, that, with the addition of gain to the nation by freight, we *may* call it 40 millions; and that it *may* be of equal or more advantage to the nation, than the sale of 120 millions worth of manufactures of foreign materials; (see p. 43.) and I most gladly confess, that the advantage to be expected from exportation, when our lands shall be advanced to *full culture*, is *almost infinitely greater*. But then in *justice to truth* I must confess, that great deductions from this *national gain*, of above 33 millions, ought to be made.

How much have the people been oppressed by taxes to raise the bounty! how often have the *sober* and *industrious* manufacturers of our own raw materials, been *beggared* and *starved*, or perhaps *hanged*, in consequence of the too high price of corn at home! how much have we *paid* and *lost* by *importation* of *foreign* corn;

corn; nay, by re-importation of our own; and that of the worst species too! the reflection is too melancholy to be longer insisted on by the *humane man*, than is necessary to convince the *hardened politician*.——All this, my worthy friend, is the sad effect of neglecting to advance by every reasonable means our cultivation to its proper height. In that case, exportation of corn which is now *frequently* a source of *lamentable evils*, would be (under providence) a constant source of riches to our people, very consistently with the happiness of every class, and even every individual.

From what has been argued in this Letter, it appears, I think, most evidently that we ought peremptorily not to ascribe *any part* of the *one hundred millions sterling supposed* to be saved to the nation by lowering the price of corn, (see p. 48.) to the exportation of corn; since it has appeared *improbable*, that the lowering of the price is at all owing to exportation.

As to *importation*, an embargo on which is supposed to have the same effect as *liberty of exportation*, (p. 37.) I agree with you, Sir, that as importation and exportation are *contrary* measures, an *embargo* on *one*, may justly be considered as *similar* to *liberty* of the other; and therefore as it has not appeared, that *exportation* has, on a *fair balance* increased *domestic plenty* upon the whole, and lowered the price; so neither can it appear, that an embargo on importation has had this effect; nor can either measure be reasonably expected to have

this effect, unless it could be made in prospect *certain, extensive and permanent*. Then, and *then only* these measures would in the nature of things be attended with these effects, which *certainty of sale* creates, *viz. plenty and cheapness*. But our present state of tillage admits of no such establishment with regard to the *harmony of agriculture and manufacture*. When corn is so plentiful among us, as with the prospect of importation, not sufficiently to *pay and encourage* the cultivator, high *duties on* or even *express prohibition* of importation should take place; and when it is so much more plentiful as far more than to suffice for domestic use, exportation should be *allowed*, and in some cases encouraged by a bounty; though the need of such a bounty is always a strong proof of *bad policy*, which has not provided for the production of corn on such terms, that we can sell it at foreign markets, without paying our people for carrying it thither, or, what is the same thing in effect, giving some part of it for *buying* the rest.

If on one side, the sum of money given as *bounty*, cannot properly be considered as an *absolute loss* to the nation, because supposed to continue in the hands of our natives, the merchants, exporters; yet on the other side, it cannot *properly be considered* as the same thing with an individual's paying with one hand and receiving with the other. The wealthy merchant *receives*; but the consumer, the industrious and sober labourer pays the bounty
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in the taxes or excises, by which it is raised; and no wonder, that he cannot be persuaded, that it is the same thing whether he *receive* or *pay*; especially, if he think the price of his bread has been heightened, and that he pays to heighten it.

I imagine, my good Sir, that I could co-operate with your noble scheme of advancing our lands to the perfection of culture, by suggesting some means which you have not hit upon. But this is no place to enter on the discussion of them.—I shall conclude this long Letter, with a thorough acquiescence in your praise of a part of the *French* King's edict of *July* 1764, concerning the free circulation of corn through the kingdom. To our shame be it owned, we seem intirely inattentive to this great and necessary object; insomuch that many parts of the kingdom groan with the pangs of hunger, while others revel in plenty.—The ideas of our magistrates on that subject have often been so wrong, that instead of *superintending* and *encouraging* badgers, they have *absolutely restrained* them, when they were the *only* and *useful* nay *necessary* means of effectual circulation.—Our inland navigations seem to promise much on this subject; and other means might be put into execution to co-operate effectually with them.—In the mean time, if we are actuated by such *false shame* and *delicacy*, as not to be willing to imitate our enemies the *French*, let us remember, that

it was a person born in the same island with us *Englishmen*, whose *invention suggested*, and *application obtained* the edict in question.—

I am, dear Sir, most sincerely, your obedient and obliged servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

East Newton, May 30th, 1767.

P. S. It would be at once a very *entertaining* and *instructive* employment, to consider how far the state of public affairs, may be supposed to have influenced the prices of corn, &c. in the different periods of our history.

P. P. S. I must remark, that if your arguments to prove, that “lowering the price” of provisions does not *advance* our *manu-
“factures*, but the contrary;” are good; then all these strongly militate against the increase of our growth of corn, unless you would have us depend entirely on the exportation of it, and not work up our own excellent raw materials, even such as are produced by the husbandman.

It is a remark worth notice, that notwithstanding all our loud boasts of the great advantages, which the public has gained by exportation *with a bounty*; yet no nation in *Europe* has thought fit to imitate us in this measure, though they have been ready enough to adopt almost every thing which was evidently of public utility.

To the FARMER.

Letter the Fourth, on his Letter the Third.

Dear Sir,

I AGREE with you intirely in thinking that all who now argue against inclosures on *general principles* are *merely contemptible cavillers*, p. 53. Give me leave to add, that since much of the advance of our present cultivation to a state of *perfection*, must result from inclosures of commons, downs, &c.—though the practice is carried on with great vigour and success, yet there are several points relative to this great work, which don't seem to be attended to so much as they ought.—One is the choice of commissioners. These, it is evident, should always be men not only remarkable for their skill, but above the *suspicion* of a want of integrity and impartiality. That they are frequently not such*, is too manifest from the great numbers of complaints which we daily hear of injuries to private property by the *partiality* as well as *unskilfulness* of commissioners. I am ready, Sir, to suppose, that many of these complaints may proceed from the partiality of the proprietors, whose avidity is scarce to be satisfied; and I am well aware, how *invidious* and *laborious* as well as *useful* a character that of a good commissioner is. But after all, I apprehend,

* See *Northern Tour*, Vol. i. p. 252—263.

that

that several notorious acts of injustice are frequently to be found; and the discovery of some of these is made very public, and discourages numbers of persons of no inconsiderable fortune or interest, from assenting to new inclosures, and retards public improvement and riches.

Another mistake, which, I apprehend, very commonly prevails, is to exclude all sheep from the new inclosures on a supposition that they will destroy the quick-setts. And so indeed they would, unless these were properly fenced.—But if men could be prevailed upon to be at the expence of posts with three rails towards their quick setts, they would soon find it repaid by the advantage resulting to their fallows and stubbles from the dung of their sheep, and from the food the sheep there find; and in a still much greater degree from feeding sheep upon turnips and clover. As matters are at present managed, scarce any kind of animal can feed in the new inclosures, till the quick setts are up, without ruining them.

I agree with you, Sir, that “the different circumstances of *large* or *small* farms
“are matters of the most serious attention;” p. 53. and that you have given them the utmost, and determined upon a display of the several cases with great judgment, first as to the quantity of the produce, and its value to the farmer and the public; secondly, as to the number of people employed; thirdly, as to the different value to the state, of the
hands

hands employed in each class of farms; and lastly, as to the different advantages resulting to the landlords, p. 53, 54.

Every sensible and experienced person must, Sir, confess, that farms are taken with such almost infinite variety of circumstances, that the most penetrating writer scarce knows how to reduce them *with propriety* to a few general classes. Your division into small, middling, large, and very large ones, may be as proper as any. But as it is natural for you, Sir, and every man who *writes, speaks, or even thinks* on such subjects as these, to draw his notions from farms in his own neighbourhood, with which he is best acquainted, your readers who would profit by your *general* reflections should apply them with an eye to the particular circumstances of their neighbourhood, which could not come under your knowledge. Thus, for instance, every man who would judge of the properest method of letting out his estate, should consider not only the particular state of his land and the tenant offering, but the price of labour in his neighbourhood, of manures, nay of fuel, and every other convenience to be bought; the nearness and goodness of market towns, the roads, the poor, the demand for any commodity, and a thousand things else; without a thorough knowledge of which he will never be able to proportion the size of his farm to the proposed tenant, though he knew the value of his land in general, and of the tenant's purse ever so well. These circumstances,

cumstances, which may be called *extraneous*, when compared with the *more intrinsic*, may be such as to make a very considerable difference in the size of farms properly assorted, even perhaps of two to one in intrinsic value. — My meaning, I hope, Sir, is obvious; *viz.* that a tenant with a *given stock* or *purse* and family, may in some situations as well manage a farm of double the value, as in others one of the half. — Your reasons in p. 55. why farms on a poor soil cannot in the *present mode of culture*, be advantageously managed by small farmers, seem conclusive; and your reasons through p. 57, 58, 59 and 60, why small farmers of arable ground are generally pernicious to themselves and the public, seem equally unanswerable.

Your opinion in p. 60. that the *middling farmers* are much more deserving of encouragement than the *small* ones, and that *large*, but *not very large* farms, are most beneficial to the occupiers, and the public, (p. 61—64.) appears very well grounded.

Your observation (in p. 80.) that *small* farms if not overloaded with building, may be most advantageous to the landlord, appears to proceed on good grounds; because small farms, as being more demanded, give higher rent. And yet I must confess, I think this advantage *generally fallacious*: for it is not the *offer* or *engagement* of a tenant to pay an high rent, but his *continuing* to pay it, which enriches the landlord. And since the small farmer

has himself and frequently as large a family as the larger farmer, to maintain out of his little territory, unless he be *peculiarly skilful* and *industrious*, or have some other dependence on trade, &c. I think he will never continue to pay an *higher* rent, but prove as pernicious to his landlord as to himself and the public.

You apprehend, Sir, that I should dissent from your opinion about the superior advantage of *grazing* farms to *arable*, because you thought me a warm advocate for the latter. But I think it very consistent, both in you and me, to wish and endeavour, that our *barren* lands may be *improved* by the plough; and that our rich ones may be kept to *grazing*, if the former, as they always will, supply corn enough.—I doubt not but a small farm will be far more profitable to the occupier in grass, than when arable, provided he have not some *barren part*, which he can cultivate without *much expence*, and which will maintain him with corn, and keep him from the expence of attending markets to purchase bread with eady money.

Perhaps also, I might allow this to be the case of *middling farms*, if I did not see (p. 88.) that you suppose one of these when turned to grazing, to require *two horses*. Now if that be the case, unless the ground be very rich, these two *voracious* animals might certainly be employed with advantage, to till a mode-

rate quantity of ground*; or if it be *too rich*, and no *poorer* adjoining can be had, I should think two horses too many to be maintained by any middling grazing farm.—

As to *very large* farms, though *grazing* ones, certainly, Sir, you are too averse to the plough, when you would allow only a small portion for *turnips*, *carrots*, and *oats*. (p. 89.) As to the last, as few as you please, provided you give a *succedaneum* in carrots, &c. But the stock on a large grazing farm will, in winter, certainly want both turnips, carrots, and some considerable quantity of corn to finish their *summer* and *autumnal* feeding, or to prepare for *summer milking*.—

Let us now *suppose*, my worthy friend, your conclusion in p. 94. *viz.* “Grass farms of whatever size, are by far most advantageous to the landlord,” to be *irrefragable*. Yet if the production of a far greater quantity of corn than we now grow, be *necessary* for the good of the public, that we may export large quantities; we must hence again conclude, that either the advantage of individuals, landlords, must yield to that of the public, or in process of time and culture, all the land in *England* should be laid to grass.—But I apprehend, that the true advantages of *individuals* and the *public* are *very compatible*, nay *essentially connected*, and

* I have a tenant, who tills a considerable quantity of ground, 40 or 50 acres, with his two horses.

that these will always result from a due assortment of tillage and pasture.

I must also add, Sir, that the articles of rent, of price of manures, and of labour, are such, as very generally to turn the scale of profit for or against pasturage, though chiefly for it. The further discussion of your subject may, however, offer itself in the sequel of my strictures on your excellent Letters.—Your concession, that *grass* farms are *infinitely* less *advantageous* to *population* than the *arable*, is *just* and *ingenuous*. I am, dear Sir, with all possible respect, your obedient and obliged servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

East Newton, June 1st, 1767.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Fourth, on his Fifth Letter.

Dear Sir,

I AM truly glad to find that you as it were begin your fourth Letter, by this judicious remark, (I might justly honour it with the name of *maxim*) viz. “ One of the *chief* “ *points*, which tends to render husbandry “ profitable to its professors, is a *due proportion* between the *arable* and *pasture* lands of

"a farm." p. 97. When you say, however, that "the farmer *depends* on his cattle for a "sufficient quantity of manures;" (p. 98.) You will, on reflection, soften the expression by inserting, "*often*," or "*chiefly*," or "*generally*," because it is well known, how great a proportion the quantity of *lime, marl, clay, ashes, &c.* must bear to the dung of cattle; insomuch, that I apprehend it greatly exceeds it, at least in many places.

You have, Sir, in p. 100. an excellent maxim, *viz.* "the fewer the divisions of the " [arable] farm are, the less in general the "profit."—You establish this point so well by your reasonings in p. 100, 101, 102, 103, and 104, that I think they cannot be *even* gainsaid.

I agree intirely with you, Sir, also in your assertion, p. 103, that "horses are kept at "such a great expence*,—they ought *always* "to be employed, or they can *never* pay for "their food."

I acquiesce also in your judgment of the preferableness of an *ox draught* to that of *horses* in *general*, and what you advance on this head to the end of the letter. There are, however, some few points in which, I think, more allowances should be made on the other side, than you have made; and I may perhaps add some illustration and confirmation of your opinion *in general*.

* In many places at 7 *l. per annum*, and in some at more.

I live, Sir, in a country, in which many oxen are used, in which more have been used, and in which I wish to see more used again. I have given the subject much deserved attention, and I am resolved to write *impartially*.

I think, Sir, we cannot justly say, "Oxen are not *near* so subject to illness and being "lame as horses." p. 105.—We may probably say, they are *not more so*, or *not quite so much*. But I think, whoever is much acquainted with oxen, especially if *obliged* to work on *public* roads, and considers how much tenderer their foot is, than that of an horse, and how *much worse defended* by shoes; also how the position of their heads in working exposes them to hurts in their eyes, &c. by sand, &c. must confess, that I have said all that justly can be said for them. Nor can I, Sir, allow with you, that "if lameness overtakes them, they remain *fit* and *ready* "for fattening," p. 105. On the contrary, a lame ox will not *readily* feed, if *pain* attends his lameness, which is almost always the case; and lameness will often reduce an *half fat ox* to *absolutely lean*, and lose a whole year's feeding.

You might, however, have expressed yourself more strongly, when you say, "the shoeing of oxen costs not so much as that of "horses;" (p. 106.) it costs not *nearly so much*; and you may add, that where oxen are not intended for the *road*, but for *home business*, it is in this country, in which great numbers

numbers are kept, very unusual to shoe them at all.—The business of shoeing is a matter of some delicacy and danger, and so few smiths are well acquainted with it, that several farmers rather go sometimes with oxen on the public roads *unshod*, than incur the danger and trouble of shoeing.

Your observation, that “no beasts fat kind—lier than worked ones,” p. 106. is well grounded, if restricted to such as are wrought with *moderation* *. But oxen are so unfit for over-work, that after it they feed *very slowly*, having contracted *many internal disorders, never cured well*, and sometimes not at all.

Your assertion, “That oxen are *as proper* for all work as horses,” p. 106. I think, must have restrictions. First, On public roads, for reasons above given; and secondly, in *wet lands* in spring; in which their weight sinks them so, that they both fatigue themselves sadly, and poach the ground so, that it often becomes unfit to sow with beans, &c.—A skilful farmer went from this neighbourhood to a farm of my father’s, near *Borough Bridge*, the soil *strong and wet*. He carried with him several yokes of noble oxen; fully convinced, that he should by his example persuade his new neighbours to change their horses for oxen. But one year convinced him, that it was necessary to part with his *own*.

A point of much greater *dispute*, and in-

* For obvious reasons, after moderate exercise, all animals feed better, as it creates proper evacuations, &c.

deed reasonable doubt, is, "Whether a pair of stout oxen will plough as much as a pair of stout horses." I apprehend, a pair of very strong horses will exceed in strength any oxen, except they have been bulls, and then gelt. A pair of stout oxen, however, may be equal to the ploughing in one day, any ground which a pair of horses would plough. Only it is evident, they will not plough the same ground in the same time, horses being superior to them in quickness; and the hurrying of oxen is *pernicious* in many respects, if not *fatal* to them. Now in a critical season, speed is of *great consequence*; and this consideration, doubtless, prejudices many countries against ox draughts.

It is a common saying, in this ox country, that "a pair of oxen are only equal to one horse." I have inquired thoroughly into the foundation of this *rural proverb or maxim*, and believe I have found it, *viz.* that as oxen are not used to go *alone*, the husbandman must have one horse before them; and as he is persuaded, that he could work the work with two horses, he considers his oxen as only equal to one.

I will not, Sir, positively assert, that oxen may be *made* to go in the draught *alone*, because I never saw an instance*. But from the obedience of this animal, I have no doubt but they might.—However, till this practice be

* I am told, many people have seen instances.

introduced, it will be prudence in the husbandman, who would save the keeping of what useless stock he can, to put a galloway or very slight horse before his oxen.—As to the number of oxen in some places employed in the same plough, &c. I am apprehensive, the practice is owing to several causes. In the first place, the real strength of a stout ox is little known. Secondly, where numbers are used, they are generally weak and young; and it is judicious not to exert their full strength. Thirdly, where numbers of stout full-grown oxen are used together in a plough, &c. the reason is, that the owner fears to bring down the flesh of his oxen ready for feeding; and as he has many, and their harness is not expensive, he judiciously chooses to divide his labour among them.—Our farmers, who keep oxen in this neighbourhood, generally plough with two oxen and two horses; but when they plough out swarth, or plough *any* steep ground, they draw four oxen and two horses, if they can spare them. In waggons, they use numbers proportioned to their loads, the roads, seasons, convenience, &c. generally four or six oxen, and two or one horse.

I think one's *ridicule*, rather than *indignation* is raised at Mr. Lisle's teams eight or ten oxen together in a plough, unless the soil be (as you observe p. 107.) *rock itself*, whatever the construction of the plough were. But be it remembered with gratitude by the public,
that

that Mr. *Lisle* endeavoured to introduce the use of oxen; with some success; and first attempts are *usually awkward*.—I remember many years ago, to have seen a team of oxen, ten or twelve, with some horses, ploughing in Lord *Falconberg's* park at *Newburgh* with a plough of suitable construction. But then the design was to force a way through the roots of old trees, &c. and I know it succeeded.

As to the expence of a boy to drive the oxen, though with us it comes to much more than your 1*d.* or 1*d.* halfpenny, viz. 4 times as much at least, (4*d.* for meat and drink, 3 meals, and 2*d.* wages) yet I agree with you entirely, Sir, that “this additional expence “does by no means reduce them to a par “with horses,” (p. 106.) It is however to be wished, that the leading horse could be reduced, as I verily think, he might. Whether oxen should be *from the first* taught to go without a leader, or inured to it when *made tame* to the yoke already, I will not determine; though the former method seems rather eligible. But both may easily be tried.

—The reduction of our growth of oats by a reduction of the number of horses used in husbandry, would be a most wise measure; though in abatement it must be confessed, that oat straw is *so excellent, so much preferable* to any straw whatever, for oxen and all other cattle, that many farmers think their oat straw equal in value to a good crop of hay from the same ground. Oats however are, as you justly call them, p. 3. a *very voracious*

vegetable ; and I agree with you *intirely*, that
 “ oats by a *prudent, neat* farmer are *never*
 “ sown on land which would not produce
 “ either *wheat, barley or rye* ;” (p. 112.) and
 I question whether the loss sustained in the
 ensuing crops be not frequently *equal or nearly*
equal to the worth of an oat crop. They are,
 however, a *neccessary evil*, unless a less *vora-*
cious substitute can be found.——I assent, Sir,
 to your enumeration of benefits resulting from
 the preference of an ox draught to that of
 horses, except one, *viz.* that the fields will be
much cleaner, (p. 122.) This I cannot see, and
 therefore will not urge. I am, dear Sir, your
 sincere friend and humble servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

East Newton, June 2d, 1767.

TO the FARMER.

Letter the Sixth, on his Fifth Letter.

Dear Sir,

I SHALL distinguish my reflections on the
 subject of your fifth Letter, under the se-
 veral heads which yours are ranged under.

You think, Sir, that it is most certain, as to
lucerne, the *Sarritions*, *Runcations*, and *Riga-*
tions of the *Romans* can *never* answer in *Eng-*
land, for the culture of this plant.—If we can
 find out other methods which will answer, as,
 I apprehend, that of *transplantation*, and per-
 haps

haps that of *drilling*, may, it is of *less* consequence whether or no the *Roman* method would answer with us; nay, perhaps, of *no consequence* at all. However, it can be no *unentertaining* or *uninstructive* task to inquire, whether or no the *Roman* method would succeed with us; and if not, *why*; as such discoveries might promote our knowledge in vegetation, &c.

It is a matter of some *critical nicety* to know *precisely* * what is meant by the *Sarritions*, *Runcations*, &c. of the *Romans*. But without great *critical acumen*, we may know enough of these operations in general, to conclude that they are *very necessary* and *successful* in agriculture, and especially cultivation of grasses; and why they should not succeed in regard to *lucerne*, I neither can *know*, nor *guess*.—Mr. *Harte's* method of *transplanting* seems excellent, if the expence of keeping the plants free from weeds, be not an overbalance to the profit; as I fear it may, in some countries, where the soil is much inclined to weeds, and labour is far from being cheap.

I have given some account of my experiments on this subject, on a small scale in the *Museum Rusticum*; and I shall add here *only*, *1st*, my *lucerne* transplanted two years ago, flourishes very much, and has for some time

* *Sarritio* and *Runcatio* both appear to signify, *weeding*; but in what they differ, is not easy to determine. Perhaps the former signifies, *weeding* with an *instrument*; the latter, with the *hand*.

been high enough to mow ; 2dly, that it bears *retransplanting* very well ; for in the last month, finding the plants too thin in some rows, I took up some where they were *thickest*, and retransplanted them, when the *buds* were ready to open into leaf. These buds *immediately* died, the roots not being able without time to *imbibe* and *communicate* the earth's nutritive juices, especially in a season without rains. But they now, without one exception, I think, revive and bud *promisingly*.—As to drilling, it being most evident, that the roots of the plants are much confined by each other, though they have opportunity of spreading into the intervals of the rows ; I question whether the plants in broad-cast, not *thick sown*, may not prosper as *well* or *better*, if they can be kept free from weeds.—At least, my *drilled* lucerne of *one* year old, is in all respects *as promising*, as that of *two* on no worse a soil. I am indeed conscious, that I was forced to begin my experiments of drilling lucerne on a soil impregnated with *grass seeds*, and perhaps some *grass roots* ; so that the case may be different in a *very clean* soil.—Of one point, Sir, I think, I must be certain ; *viz.* that we can hardly *drill* the seed *too thin*, as the *quick growing* of the plants must *infallibly* destroy *all* hope of their being *vigorous* and *durable*. I cannot, however, see, my worthy friend, why we should conclude, that *undoubtedly* *broad-cast* lucerne cannot *improve* the ground, if you mean *in no degree* ; if you only mean
in

in like degree as the *transplanted* and *drilled lucerne* do, I assent; supposing you to ascribe this improvement to the *ploughing, hoeing, or digging up* the intervals of the rows.—But then, since this improvement is only advantageous as it nourishes the lucerne designed to *continue*, the question recurs, whether as much profit from the lucerne may not be derived in the method of *broad-cast* as in that of *transplanting* or *drilling*?—And I own the case is with me still *problematic*, at least with respect to some places.—I *intirely*, Sir, agree with you, that “a certain premium for every acre, is the only thing which will ever spread the culture” of lucerne.—

Carrots.

Your account of nearly a thousand bushels of carrots reaped from an acre, is indeed surprising, (see p. 119.) and justifies your assertion, (p. 121.) that “whenever the soil will admit them, their culture is *by far more profitable* than that of the turnips;”—and also than that of parsnips, (see *ibid.*) Your account, Sir, that men *accustomed* to the work, will perform *all* the *three* hoeings of an acre of carrots, for 15s. while, on the contrary, men unaccustomed to it, cannot perform even the first hoeing under 30s. (twice the sum) shews of what consequence it is to the *public*, as well as *individuals*, to render the practice *common* on soils which will answer; and “that a certain premium *per acre* will
“ be

"be the only method of extending the culture of this useful plant." p. 121.

Parsnips.

It seems an important inquiry, "Whether parsnips will grow on a soil too stiff for carrots; and if they will, what is the most successful culture of them in *Brittany*?"

Barley.

I agree with you, Sir, (p. 122.) that there is no great probability, that this plant will be cultivated in any extent, so as fully to try its effect in feeding of sheep, unless some certain premium for every acre be offered.

Burnet.

It is but justice to myself and the public, Sir, to confess, that I apprehend, that my horses now seem in general to eat *burnet*, with some degree of avidity; so that probably the *bitterness* or *acridity* of it, which seemed at first to make them dislike it, being got over with the novelty, it will become agreeable to this species of stock also. My next neighbour, assures me, it is so to his sheep.—I think with you, (p. 123.) that the societies premium for *burnet* on the *poorest soil*, is likely to be of singular utility: and I propose to try it on a very * poor kind of soil, though not of a *driving sand* †.

* From what I have observed, since the writing of this Letter, *Burnet* is always in exact proportion to the *poorness* of the soil.

† The experiment of *Burnet* on a *driving sand* should be made, because its *top-root* makes it likely to thrive on such.

Mr.

Mr. Rocque's collection from the public for burnet seed at 2s. per lb. was indeed a *flagrant imposition*, as you observe, (ibid.) and and I am glad to hear that it is got down to 4d.—I sowed burnet on a gravelly soil in May 1765; and only one single stalk went into flower that year, and the whole continued very low; but it flowered, flourished, and feeded very well in the summer of 1766. I gathered the seed when fully ripe in the latter end of last summer, or the beginning of autumn; and I have now *burnet* in as full flower, and as high and flourishing from that sowing, as of the sowing which produced the seed it sprung from. I also last year transplanted several plants of the preceding year's sowing, and cut the roots, as in the case of lucerne. They all took, and have done well, but not better than the untransplanted.

Grass Seeds.

I have, Sir, in the *Museum Rusticum* observed, how inadequate the premiums, offered for the cultivation of these separately, must be to the trouble and expence attending it; and therefore, I readily agree with you, (p. 126) that a premium of twenty pounds for every acre of one species, to the number of five, would be the *only effectual* method to advance the culture so much, as to make it of any value to the public.—I should however hope, that as the benefits arising from a culture of the grasses *separately* are *obvious*, if the price of the *separate* seeds could be reduced to nearly

an equality with the mixed ones, many farmers might be induced to prefer the *new* to the *old method*; though you think otherwise, (p. 128.)

Cultivation of wheat, &c. in drills.

I allow with you, (p. 128.) that it seems yet a *dubious point*, whether the *old* or *new* husbandry should be *preferred*.—We must, indeed, wish to have more particular accounts of the clear profit of crops of wheat, &c. in different circumstances; and, as you observe, it has often occurred to me, that the *old culture* producing only three times the seed, must be very deficient (p. 130.) and therefore no comparison of the two methods should be made on such a foundation.—I am inclined to hope the *new method* may be *preferable on the whole*, in many cases, when *properly managed*; but I fear it is so difficult to obtain not the *inanimate*, but the *animate* instruments, the *labourers*, who perversely spoil new attempts, that I apprehend the two methods will not speedily have a fair trial.

Turnips.

You, Sir, justly call, (in p. 129.) the transplanting a *whole crop* of turnips, *ridiculous*, as not likely to pay the cost. But as hoeing of turnips when *too thick* is a most rational practice; so transplanting some of them into bare patches, which would else bear nothing, is said on good authority of experience to be a *beneficial practice*. Yet, I apprehend, the hitting the proper time for this operation, both as to age of the plants and the condition of the air for rain, &c. must be necessary to
render

render it *profitable*; for I have tried the experiment myself, and all the *transplanted plants died*.

Madder.

I am, Sir, myself, totally unacquainted with this plant; but your observations, (p. 131, 132) seem *judicious*.

Bees.

The procuring honey and wax without destroying the bees, seems an object deserving the attention of the Society, and beneficial to the public.

Machine for drilling lands.

We are told that several machines for draining of pastures, harrowing out the earth *equally* on both sides, are offered to the Society. One wishes to hear more of them. However, the terms on which one of the inventors proposes to employ workmen to perform the operation with his machine, seem high; so if he obtain any exclusive use, the public seems not likely to be much benefited by the invention. But the Society's views are *noble* and *generous*. You may be very right in wishing to see a machine to drain *ploughed lands*; but whether such an one could work much below the present rates, I know not. I suppose, however, it might.

Machine for slicing turnips.

I confess, I think this object not very important, and could have wished that the 20*l.* had been offered for some other useful desideratum. I think it requires no great skill in

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mechanics

mechanics to invent such a machine as this is, and *cheap* also.

Turnip cabbage.

Of this plant, I have a very favourable opinion. I sowed some seed the last *spring*, or rather *summer*; for it was in the latter end of *May* or beginning of *June*. The plants, *once transplanted*, grew to a fine bulk, though thus late raised, and sheep are *excessively fond* of them. I sowed some more seed in autumn, and obtained plants to set out before winter. They throve very well notwithstanding the wintry snows, rains, frosts, &c. and I have planted them out this spring, very promising plants. The rains, however, seem to threaten the making them run to seed.—This plant, as you observe, may be a *pretty secure succedaneum* to a late crop of turnips in spring, which is a *very insecure* possession; and the method you advise to raise them on land designed for barley, seems *very feasible*, p. 135.

Boorcole.

Of this plant, I think as you do, that it seems least to deserve the Society's premiums, since common colworts promise as much.

Your proposal, Sir, (p. 137.) that the Society should depute persons to see farms cultivated in *particular manners*, in order to be assured of the effects of any peculiar culture, seems the best foundation for a treasury of indubitable experiments. Your sketches, Sir, of experiments to be made under such direction are very noble. (See p. 140, 141, 142.)

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But as *all the divisions* in experiment IV. are on arable ground, I see not why they need be *fenced in separately*, if this be your meaning, as it would be a *great and unnecessary* expence.

You well know my concurrence in opinion with you about the necessity of authenticating experiments by addition of the person's *name* and *place*, before we can reasonably give them *credit*.—Your strictures on *general* treatises, systems, &c. of agriculture, and Mr. *Mills's* in particular, are very just. The purloining from former books without a common knowledge to distinguish *bad* from *good* methods, and making readers *pay again and again* for the *very worst* and *most absurd*, is indeed shameful! Your fixing on the instance of Mr. *Mills's* quoting, as if to recommend an absurd advice, to buy 300 sows, to be kept with their pigs on *boiled turnips* and *clover*, is judicious; but his book teems so with *errors*, that you might *justly* give that character to a considerable part of it, which you bestow on this in particular.

I agree with you, Sir, that experiments should be *faithfully* related, with every circumstance which can *possibly* tend to set the matter in a *true light* to the reader; but when that is done, I cannot think the *remarks* and *conclusions* the *inferior part* of experiments. On the contrary, I think them, if *judicious*, the *very fruit* of the experiments. Some readers may be *able* to gather them them-

selves; but others are not.—To the former they are *pleasing*, as confirmations of their own judgment; to the latter they are necessary instructions.

I am, Sir, with much esteem, your sincere friend and servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

East Newton, June 3d, 1767.

P. S. I am glad, Sir, to find by a Letter, I am favoured with since the date of the above, that you intend to oblige the Public with a collection of experiments in husbandry, and conclusions grounded thereon.

P. P. S. In confirmation of our opinion about Mr. *Mills's* manner of recording experiments, I must mention one almost as extraordinary as that noticed by you, and without any signs of disapprobation. He tells us, (vol. i. p. 88.) that a farmer towards the end of *September* sowed rye, and the next summer ploughed it in at the usual time of sowing, and sowed wheat; thus sacrificing a crop of rye as manure for wheat, when a good crop of rye is nearly equal to wheat in value, and the ground nearly as much exhausted by one as by the other. How soon would farmers be ruined by following such examples!—Not *greatly inferior* in absurdity to this practice, is that of fallowing two years together. *Camillo Tarello*, (see *Mem. de la Société*, tom. ii. par. 3.) has strikingly explained the advantages of ploughing twice as oft as usual, and you and I agree,

I agree, that it is better not to *sow at all*, than to sow land not well ploughed; but then the double ploughing should be performed in *one* year; and omission of sowing in consequence of *bad husbandry* is no argument for omission of it in a course of regular husbandry. Who can stand the expences of rent, tillage, &c. and have only one crop in three years? yet Mr. Mills, (vol. i. p. 280.) with approbation, quotes the explanation on this principle of that famous distich of Virgil, *viz.*

*Illa seges demum votis respondet avari
Agricolæ, quæ bis soles, bis frigora sentit.*

Though both *Tull* and *Maxwell* gave this *unnatural* and *injudicious* interpretation, Mr. Mills should not have adopted it.—*Seges* poetically signifies the ground, which, on this interpretation, would have bore the *sun* and *frost* *thrice*, not *twice*.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Seventh.

Dear Sir,

I APPROVE what you advance on timber and other trees in Letter the VII. only I think the subject admits some restrictions and illustrations.

You assert, that oak *cannot be transplanted*
like

like other wood, into hedge-rows, &c. Now the truth is, that oaks may be transplanted into hedge rows, &c. with good advantage, even when they are of considerable bulk, if proper care be taken to carry away a good deal of earth with them; and especially if in the shooting season, before transplantation, a trench be dug around the tree, suppose at two or three foot from the tree, according to its bulk, and the earth be restored, so that the side roots being cut may throw out new fibres, which will be prepared to gain nourishment in the earth they are to be transplanted into. But it must be allowed, Sir, that oaks cannot be transplanted into hedge-rows, &c. with equal advantage as trees which don't strike a tap root; for this tap root being necessarily cut in trees of any bulk to be transplanted, the tree cannot draw such nourishment from the side roots as it would from these and the unmaimed tap root also.—And hence it happens, that oaks which are *self-set* have much more heart than those which *have been transplanted*; and therefore it is no wonder that the judicious wood-buyer is unwilling to give *nearly* the same price for oak trees equally well looking in woods and in hedge-rows, since the probability that the latter have been transplanted is very great; and for any use *heartly oak* is of much more value than the *sappy*.

Your observation on the great number of timber trees destroyed by lopping, is very just; and your assignment as the cause the want of
fuel,

fuel, is well grounded. But there is another, which you have omitted, and yet it is one of the chief, nay, in some countries, the only cause of this destruction, *viz.* the want of *stakes* for the making and repair of dead hedges. As farms are circumstanced in many countries, and this in particular, this expence is such as to be incredible to persons unacquainted with it. The necessity of the thing in many cases is such, that the landlord is obliged not only to connive at it, but expressly to allow it in his lease. These loppings are evidently included in *hedge-boot*; and not only the expence of *leading* from, but frequently the impossibility of *buying*, even at a distance, makes such allowance necessary.

One of the first instances, therefore, Sir, of good œconomy in a landlord, is to oblige his tenant to set with quicks, and sufficiently fence all the dead hedges of a farm. If the tenant is not able to do this without allowance, the landlord cannot lay out his money better than in such an allowance, which is sure to repay him, or his heirs, amply.

It is obvious to observation, that, the fences of a farm thus gradually changed to *quick* from *dead*, not only all lopping of trees might be totally abolished, (at least of timber trees,) but the very cuttings of the quick fences, of thorns, &c. would supply both the *farmer's furnace* and *kitchen fire*, and give plenty of ashes for the ground; thorns, &c. growing better for being cut at proper times.

Another inconvenience, besides those you have
have

have mentioned, arises from planting of trees in the hedge-rows; viz. that when they are cut down, a gap and a dead fence *generally* arises. This gap is *generally* much larger than the tree cut down, sometimes from the necessity of cutting down several adjoining thorns to come fairly at the tree to be felled; but much oftner from the ignorance, carelessness, and even malice of the woodmen.—It seems an easy matter to prevent the continuance of the dead fence, by springing the tree anew. But many causes contribute to prevent this remedy.—First, the woodbuyer's using a *saw* instead of an *ax*, to bring down the tree, and that even contrary to express bargain and even article, he presuming (or at least his workmen) that the wood-seller will not *sue out* a bond for such a transgression: Secondly, the wood-buyer's letting his fallen wood lie so long upon the stool, that, when it is moved, it destroys the young shoots: Thirdly, the farmer's making his dead hedge just over the stool, which prevents, or even chokes the young shoots; Or, fourthly, his leaving the stool undefended from sheep, &c. which destroy the young shoots. I might add a fifth cause, viz. the woodman's felling the trees in so bad a manner, that the rain fixes, and damages the stool, and prevents any valuable growth.

You have, Sir, proposed, that whoever cuts down wood, should, for the sake of posterity, plant *twice as many* trees. I suppose this proposition is stated on account of the supposed

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hazards

hazards to which new planted trees are exposed, so that twice the number planted may be thought only an equivalent to the number *cut down*. But, Sir, if this double number be not well secured, it will be by no means an equivalent to the number felled, and if it be, it will be nearly the double of it, when grown. *Replanting* should *always* be determined by a thorough knowledge of all circumstances of ground, &c. insomuch that in in strait bounds it may be so far from *advisable* to plant twice the number cut down, that it may be advisable not to plant *one* tree, the land being capable of much greater improvement, according to the plan of your first Letter.

Under this head of wood, you have, Sir, said nothing of springing wood, in many cases a much more cheap, easy, and *advantageous* method of supplying the wood cut down, than by *planting*. The good effects of this method, when *properly pursued*, are so obvious, that I wonder you should not have bestowed your thoughts, and employed your very useful pen upon it.

At present, all I shall say on the subject, is, that the five causes above-mentioned, as destructive of the springing of wood, are to be guarded against strictly, and any others which may occur on reflection. One cannot doubt, but wood is much more effectually sprung again in pretty considerable flats, than in hedge-rows, and the expence of necessary
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fencing is much less.—I have had occasion this very season to turn my thoughts pretty much this way, having inclosed a new spring of several acres at a considerable expence. Having never before been engaged in the like, I have learned much in a little time, by inquiry, attention, &c. but am sensible, I may yet learn much more, which will be useful to be observed in *forming new* or *reforming old* springs. At present, I shall only add, that I am well convinced, that much more of the success of springing wood again depends on the skill of the *feller* than one *unexperienced* can imagine.—I have had part of my oak this season felled by a young feller, and part by an *old* one, who has been about 40 years experienced in this business. The stools of the former are all *haggled* and *unequal*, so as to receive and retain the rain, and the bark is *jug-gled* and *broken*; while those of the latter are almost as smooth as if worked by a plain, and the bark is cut as nicely, as close, and as even, as if it were glued to the wood. In short, I verily believe from appearances, that if I had paid for the felling by the experienced hand, instead of the unexperienced being paid by the buyer, I should have been a saver; and I have even thought of employing this old practitioner to go over my stools in the spring, at my expence, in order to smooth them, &c.

I am, dear Sir, your sincere friend and servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Eighth.

E. N. June 7th, 1767.

Dear Sir,

THOUGH all men of sense must, I think, agree, that the maintenance of the poor, as it is now settled, is a very heavy burthen on the public, and that great abuses are daily committed; yet these will differ greatly in opinion, how the burthen is to be lightened, and the abuses to be redressed.—As to the *total abolition* of the poor's laws, till a new body be formed and fit for establishment, this would be attended with great inconveniencies, greater than can be well imagined.—Unless our ancestors have been more ignorant of *human nature* and the circumstances of their countrymen than can well be imagined, we must suppose that *many laws* or *principles at least of laws* in the old code, would find a place in the *new*.—That I may not be thought to write at random on this subject, Sir, I will inform you, that during a space of time much above 20 years, I assisted a father who laboured under the stone, &c. in the discharge of the duties of a Justice of the Peace, with all the attention I was master of; and as the poor are (to our reproach) very numerous in this part of the country, I had opportunities of seeing applications of the poor for relief modified by

almost every conceivable circumstance ; and it will not be thought unnatural for me to assert, that in such a length of time and extent of practice, I saw many instances of shocking oppression in the overseers, and of vice in the poor ; and I declare, I know not which set of people gave more just cause of offence. With you, Sir, the poor may be more blameable than the overseers ; and as I have no reason to dispute the truth of the facts you mention, so I doubt not from those instances, but they are the parties more generally blameable. But allow me to assure you, from my own knowledge, that the overseers in this part of the world are as generally blameable as the poor can be with you.

Since every man must judge from what he *hears, sees and knows*, I can never assent, that the Justice of Peace has *too much power*, with respect to the poor. Abuses will happen, and perhaps frequently in the discharge of magistracy of every kind. But powers should be granted necessary to carry any trust reposed with the magistrate, into execution ; and the persons with whom these trusts are to be reposed, should be chosen with care for their abilities, their principles, their temper, &c. When abuses are committed, they should be punished in proportion to the importance of the power trusted ; but the body of magistrates should not be deprived of the *necessary* powers they already possess, or even denied *new* ones. That I may not be supposed to speak from a
partiality

partiality to a body of men to whom I belong, I must, Sir, declare, that although I have the honour to be in commission of the Peace for this extensive *Riding*, yet I neither have qualified myself to act, nor have any design so to do, though I have been much importuned; and yet one reason why I decline qualification is, that as I esteem the administration of the poor laws, a very principal part of the office of a Justice of Peace, so I am fully convinced, that the most skilful and upright Justice has not sufficient power by the statutes to maintain the equitable spirit of those laws, by which he is to act.--That I may not be thought to speak without good grounds, I will mention *an instance or two*. First, No justice or justices has or have power to oblige a parish to whom a pauper by their own confession belongs, to grant a certificate that he does so, though he can live comfortably and usefully where he resides, and must starve at his settlement. Secondly, No justice or justices can oblige a parish to afford any, even the smallest relief to an actual pauper, who has their certificate, if he continue to live out of the parish, though he have in the place where he resides, friends who would contribute greatly to his comfortable maintenance. Thirdly, No justice can oblige a parish, which has an established workhouse, to contribute any thing towards the maintenance of an old or sick person, who with a *little* would live much more comfortably at home than in such workhouse.---

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The whole law of settlements should certainly be *revised*, if not *abolished*, as it is now liable to so many *mistakes*, *doubts*, *evasions*, *litigations* and *unnecessary expences*; permit me to add, *absurdities*.---I intirely agree with you, Sir, that whatsoever discourages matrimony, is very bad both in a *political* and *religious* view, true policy, and true religion, in this case, *most evidently* conspiring, as they do really in all cases, though not *so visibly*.---Instead of crouding two, three, or even four families into one cottage, which you hint to be the case in places you know, but which is utterly unknown in this country, every man who is willing to marry, should, at the *public expence*, have a *decent* and *comfortable* cottage provided for him. I say at the *public expence*, not the *parochial*, because I think true policy advises to make all the expences of the poor a *common national burthen* to be paid in the manner of the land-tax; for many reasons, and particularly this, that all disputes about settlements would then fall to the ground.---It is *incredible* to those who are not acquainted with the subject, but *certain* to those who are, that the expences arising from litigations of settlements would bear a very considerable proportion to the whole expence of the poor when properly regulated.

If I understand you rightly, Sir, I can by no means agree with you in one or two very main points, *viz.* "That no poor but such as
" have been *industrious* and *sober*, should be
" maintained

“ maintained at the *public expence*; and that
 “ these should be maintained in a work-
 “ house.” I think, Sir, I have the *clearest*
 and *strongest* reasons for my dissent: First, It
 must be *very difficult*, nay *morally impossible*,
 in very many cases, to determine who are the
industrious and *sober*, and at what point the
 boundaries are to be fixed; and as this dis-
 quisation would be very important, the whole
 maintenance of a man’s future life depending
 upon it, it would open a shocking scene of
 calumny and even perjury and malice; espe-
 cially where *interested avarice* could avoid the
 support of the poor by such calumny and per-
 jury. Secondly, What must become of those
 who were sentenced as *unindustrious* and *in-*
temperate? Must they *starve* or must they
steal?—Thirdly, The driving into a *work-*
house, people who can be maintained in their
 own houses *as conveniently*, or *more conve-*
niently to the public, with *as little* or less ex-
 pence, is an act of *wanton cruelty*.—The
 laws of *England* make a man’s house his
 castle; and the prospect of holding this in old-
 age is one of the greatest spurs to *industry* and
temperance in youth. Were I a lawgiver,
 therefore, I would enact, that the *flagrantly*
idle or *debauched* should in old age be main-
 tained in a workhouse, and others in their
 own houses.

I am, dear Sir, your sincere friend and ser-
 vant,

THOMAS COMBER.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Ninth.

Kirkby Moorside, June 5th, 1767.

Dear Sir,

THAT candour, which will (I hope) always influence you and me in every inquiry, obliges me to communicate to you a fact, which must occasion some abatement in an opinion we both espouse, viz. the *expediency of ploughing with oxen.*

Within a couple of miles of this market town, which is within 5 or 6 miles of my place, are two villages, called *Fadmoor* and *Gillimoor*, famous for breeding many oxen, not very large, but of a sort much liked. Their soil is light, chiefly a limestone, and they have little pasture, but maintain their oxen chiefly by their straw.—Meeting the other evening with a farmer, of one of these villages, (which in a manner conjoin) who appeared sensible, and had the character of an *honest* man, I soon turned the conversation to the profitableness of their ploughing with oxen, at a time when these creatures sell so well. He immediately replied, that he and his neighbours have almost totally ceased to plough with oxen. I was astonished at this reply, and instantly imagined, that if men
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so remarkable for breeding of oxen had ceased to plough with them, it was no wonder that others should; and that the high price might be accounted for by the scarcity occasioned by this change of practice. But the farmer, on my expressing this supposition, answered, That he and his neighbours had as many oxen as ever. This reply astonished me still more; and in the sequel of our conversation, he gave me the following account, which (I am sure) I shall be very exact in rendering to you. —Within these few years, the farmers of the villages ploughed with four oxen and one or two horses, finding that a weaker draught was not sufficient. They were obliged to feed these oxen with good hay, perceiving that straw was not sufficient to keep them in plight. They have now changed their long oxen ploughs into short Dutch ploughs for two horses; and with these short ploughs and two horses, he affirms, that they can plough *as much* and *as well* in four days, as they could formerly with their ox-draught in six days, while their oxen lie idle at home, and do very well with straw, insomuch that they now sell better oxen than ever.

This account, Sir, makes the advantage of an horse-draught over an ox-draught so great, that one stands astonished; and if the fact be unquestionable, as I apprehend it is, the opinion we have espoused must receive great abatements.

In short, Sir, "to be a judge of the propriety of any measure in agriculture, we must allow experiments, and encourage farmers to examine every circumstance in their situation," as appears evidently from this instance.

I am, dear Sir, your real friend and servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

P. S. Some persons, who seem to wish well to the increase of our cattle, are for having a law to oblige all grazing farmers to breed *half as many* cattle as they feed.—This injunction proceeds from great ignorance of the subject.—It seldom, very seldom happens, that the same grounds are fit for breeding and feeding. A *light, sweet* dry soil, *well watered*, suits the former; but a rich, *deep*, and *rather moist* one, the latter.—In the *former*, rents are *low*, and breeding is well paid for; in the *latter*, high, and feeding pays as well. The harmony and welfare of the *breeding* and *feeding* countries is kept up by these mutual wants, and both *individuals* and the *public* are profited. Whoever would effectually encourage breeding, should begin at what is properly called the fountain, and encourage the occupiers of light lands, and those who use oxen in tillage; and cattle thus bred will always find their way into the feeding countries. Nor let it be said, that the richer the land, the larger and better the
8 breed.

breed. It is true, the breed will be larger, and gratify the eye more, and are ornaments to a gentleman's estate, but are never so successfully bred in general, as on lighter soils. Cattle sufficiently large may be bred on light soils; but cattle of any considerable size cannot be fed on such. If, therefore, the *naturally feeding* countries become *breeding* countries, so many fewer can be fed in them: and since cattle cannot be fed with any considerable success on light soils, the demand for feeding in the richer being greatly lessened, fewer will be bred in the light soils, and fat cattle will become scarce, and the price of meat higher. There is so *natural* and so strong a connection in that case, that I think every one must see it.

June 8th.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Tenth, in Answer to his Fifth Letter.

Dear Sir,

I ENTIRELY agree with your observation on lucerne, *viz.* "a certain premium for every acre, is the only thing which will ever spread the culture," (p. 118.) Nay, I think that that ought to be extended, as you do,

under the article parsley, (p. 122.) viz. " In every object some certain offer for every acre, is the way to advance the measure."

I think, however, my friend, that you are a little too hasty, when you positively maintain, (p. 114.) that the *sanitions*, *runcations*, and *rigations*, which succeeded in old *Rome*, will not suit us now in *England*. I apprehend, that the difficulty of learning what particular operations are meant by the two first, is the only obstacle to their success here in this age; at least in a degree suited to the difference of climate. Richer ground and warmer climate must produce better crops; but if we knew exactly the instruments of sanition and runcation, I doubt not they would have their effect.

You justly observe, (p. 115—7.) that the experiments of lucerne on broad-cast, &c. seem not sufficient to build a theory on. The two great points to secure a good crop of lucerne seem to be, to break the soil sufficiently fine, and to keep it free from weeds and grass. It is certain, that in the broad-cast method, the roots can never approach the size of that which is *transplanted*, nor be so effectually kept clean. The great points to be determined, are, " Whether the expence of keeping it clean do not eat up the profit? And, whether the profit in a rich soil be proportioned to the expence?"

There is, however, an observation which seems to me worth notice, viz. that as the greatness, strongness, and roughness of the
plants

plants when propagated in the method of transplanting, are what is to compensate for the fewness of those plants, so it appears from experience, that this greatness, &c. (especially in rich lands) exposes the leaves to rot, and consequently causes a great loss. I think with you, (p. 118.) that the premium for the greatest quantity, not less than ten acres, is too inconsiderable. I have only to add, that with a strict attention to all the advice about making of lucerne hay, I could never succeed in it, and think it only a green fodder.

Your account of the carrot culture is surprising: one would think that the sowing in a furrow twenty inches deep, would be burying the seed, and is very different from the garden culture.

As you make the price of hoeing in different countries of the same soil so very different, it is a strong proof how much dexterity in this work depends on practice; but as it can be acquired by practice, this high price, where the hoeing is not known, seems no great objection to extending the culture.

You say not, Sir, what the price of taking up the crop may be; but as you say it is performed with great ease, no objection to the extending the culture seems hence to arise. I am tempted to ask a question which seems very natural, *viz.* "Would not the sowing less seed than is now used, render the expence of the first hoeing less expensive, if great care
were

were taken to choose good seed, and a regular machine to scatter it were used."

You, Sir, would do a service to your country, if you would explain any peculiarities in the *parsnip* culture in *Brittany*, and shew how we may, or why we may not rival them.

As to *parsley*, it would be worth while to examine, from what qualities it becomes excellent for sheep, and whether for the dam which gives milk, or for the lamb which feeds, or for both. From the properties which it appears to have, when applied to the human body, it should seem not to be very useful for feeding animals of any sort, being *forcing* and *diuretic*.

As to *burnet*, a plant to which I have been very attentive, I have no hopes of its being of any considerable profit on a *very poor*, or the poorest soils, because I find, on attentive observation, that this plant, in its natural state, is always proportioned to the richness of the soil it feeds on. That which the publishers of the *Museum Rusticum* have added my name to, grows on a sweet down, a sheep pasture. The burnet plants transplant well; nay, exceeding well; and if any profit be made on very poor soils, it must, I think, be by transplanting of rigorous plants, which may search deep for food: but I fear even these will speedily degenerate.

Your observation about the tediousness and expensiveness of gathering the seeds of the
several

several grass-seeds, struck me immediately on reading that premium of your society. It is not considered how free from the mixture of other seeds which are blown by winds, should these seeds be kept, and how difficult and expensive the task is. Idle people pretend, that the having unmixed seeds, is no object of a prudent man ; but, on the contrary, the succession of grasses in a pasture is a benefit. But surely it must be a loss to mow unripe grass, and in meadows of mixed grasses this must be done. Besides, it must be a benefit to have those grasses unmixed which best suit the soil, and suit also the stock.

Nothing is more evident than what you observe, (p. 129.) that the expence of every article in the *old* and *new* husbandry, must be known before we can judge of the comparison.

Your observation on the wretched produce of three times the seed in the *old* method, with which the produce of the *new* is compared, is what must have struck every one who has read that account of Mr. *de Chateauvieux*.

It is probable, that the having the wax without destruction of the bees, is an object of much more consequence than a person who has not attended to it, would imagine ; and the giving five pounds to every one who saves ten pounds of wax, is certainly a sufficient allurement, as the boxes are easily procured.

I once

I once thought of an expeditious and cheap machine for slicing of turnips, *viz.* a strong trough, the depth of a good sized turnip's thickness, with knives fixed in a strong lid, and a weight appendant, sufficient to bring the knives with such force as to cut through the turnips at once, much in the manner of the straw-cutters, which I explained to the Editors of the *Museum Rusticum*.

As to turnip cabbage, I have tried a little; and the securing a succedaneum for turnips late in spring being the object, (p. 134.) as you observe, it should be well examined how the plants bear the rains and frosts without rotting.

As to boorcole, I know nothing of it, more than that (as you observe) it seems not more promising than coleseed.

In a future edition, you will oblige the public by an account how far these premiums have answered the end proposed by the Society.

The method of the *Dublin Society*, *viz.* of being at the expence of the experiments, is the most effectual way, no doubt, of coming at truth, and you reasonably recommend the directing of such as the Society wish to know the success of (p. 139).

Those which you sketch out, (p. 140—3.) seem probable to give great experience, but must be very expensive.

Your stricture on the advice from *Mills*, *viz.* to buy three hundred sows, &c. (p. 145.) is, just,

just, and in a certain degree applicable to many other things recommended in the same way.

You will allow a clergyman to cool a little the warmth of your indignation, when you say, (p. 196.) that the collections of husbandry, which you justly chastise, are “the *most pernicious* books that are published.” You must restrain this to the *subject*: for books against religion and morality are certainly *most pernicious*. You are the son of a clergyman!

I am, dear Sir, affectionately your’s, &c.

E. N. Feb. 11th,

1770.

THOMAS COMBER.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Eleventh, in Answer to his Seventh Letter.

Dear Sir,

AS you have advanced many *great*, and even *notorious* truths in your seventh letter, on the subject of our poor, and the laws relative to them, you will, I apprehend, be surpris’d to find, that there is nothing in your whole work, in which I disagree from you so much, as a capital assertion in this letter.

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That the poor-tax is, in general, *prodigious*; that the laws relative to it give shameful occasion to litigiousness by the *uncertainty* of it, both as to the *assessing*, *collecting*, and *employing* it, cannot be doubted by an impartial man of observation. That the law of *settlements* of the poor is attended with *nearly* as many ill consequences as that of their *maintenance*, I can readily allow, and even believe it, in numerous instances, to exceed the latter. I saw, a few years ago, an attorney's bill for trying at a quarter sessions in this county, the settlement of a few poor colliers, which amounted, on one side, to above sixty pounds *Sterling*, and at length the matter was determined by a reference to lawyers, who ordered the admeasured nearest distance of a village from the pit to determine the settlement. The difficulty of finding a comfortable habitation, is, doubtless, a great discouragement to marriage, and consequently to population; but I must think, that a want of decent habitation for any man regularly settled, is rather a defect in those who have the execution of our laws, than the laws themselves. The *disagreeableness*, perhaps, (as you say) impracticability of *many* families living in *one* little cottage, is what the law by no means allows:—the Justices who permit it, must know little of the law they profess, or very ill execute their knowledge, if such complaints remain unredressed. A much greater inconvenience (and which indeed ought to be remedied by law)

law) is the want of legal power to oblige a parish to grant a certificate to the man who can live much better elsewhere, and is not wanted at the place he is settled in. The bad consequences of tea-drinking by the poor, are obvious, and indeed seem to want a legal restraint, if such can, without worse consequences, be laid. The partiality of Justices towards the poor, either in their *favour* or *disfavour*, cannot be denied, any more than that of overseers in general against them; and the hardships of small farmers who pay to the maintenance of people scarce one step below them, are notorious.

I doubt not of the truth of your remark, dear Sir, that you "never knew one circumstance of a man's working *diligently* while *young* and in *health*, to escape coming to the parish when ill or old." But, surely, my friend, you must have lived in a very corrupted part of the island; for matters are so different with us, that instances of people who do not thus work, are rarer, much rarer than the contrary.

But I now come to the great point in which I differ from you. To this dissent I am induced by the principles of my proper profession, *divinity*, and of that other which is closely connected with it, and subservient to it, *general law*.

You would have our new code of poor laws go on the foundation of maintaining only those who *cannot maintain* themselves, and

who *could* not have saved a *sufficiency* in youth and health to support themselves in age and sickness. My first objection is, that it must be a work of almost infinite labour to become master of the evidence necessary to determine who *could* have saved that sufficiency; and besides the *extreme difficulty* of determining this in every particular instance, not to say *impossibility*, (as great numbers of persons who should be witnesses, are interested and partial) if it could be ever so exactly determined, and readily too, it would be useless, for this plain and unanswerable reason, *viz.* that those who could have saved this sufficiency but have not, if they are not maintained by law, must either *steal* or *starve*, an alternative to which you would be sorry, my dear friend, to see any individual reduced. For these reasons, I must dissent from your proposals, that under our *new poor laws*, the people should *never again* have a certainty of being maintained by others in the *day of want*. Perhaps the want of such a certainty would make a considerable number who are not now *sufficiently industrious*, more so; but it would certainly drive great numbers of our melancholy countrymen to despair. Some, nay many, would rob and be hanged of course, and many others would hang themselves. It is the just glory of our country, as a Christian one, that no man who is not too proud to ask, can want support; and if vast numbers do perish because too proud to ask relief,

relief, what greater numbers would perish if sure to be refused?

The great *neglect*, and (still worse) *abuses* of *houses of industry*, by the trustees, is a just objection to them. I do not argue from this *abuse*, against the *use*; but I argue for the necessity of finding out such guards against *neglect and abuses*, as seem yet not to be found; it being the interest of so many persons to encourage those neglects and abuses.

I hope for the sake of the public, that it is *possible*, nay *practicable*, to guard *tolerably* against these *neglects* and *abuses* in general. But it will be found a task much more difficult than can be imagined by any unexperienced person. As they are now managed *generally*, these *houses of industry* (as they are called) should rather be called *houses of terror*, which incline people rather to *stay* and *starve* at home, than enter them, to die there of *various distresses*.

I must also confess, that I cannot agree with you in thinking, that the other objection against these houses, has no *real weight*, viz. that the *confining* of *elderly people* from their *connections* is an *hardship*. By the law of the land, a man may say to the poor, (as you do) "We are to *maintain* you, and we will *maintain* you *where*, and in what manner we please." But by the law of *humanity* and the *gospel*, no man should say to the poor who have been *industrious* and *frugal*, and yet
could

could not lay up a sufficiency for sickness and old age, " We will maintain you at an *equal*, or even *greater* expence in a workhouse, than we could at your own houses, because we will *mortify* you." I am now, my friend, nearly fifty years old, and I do not know many persons who were able to lay up a sufficiency for sickness and age, in that class of people who usually receive alms. I think I knew 99 or 100, who could only just save, beyond necessaries for themselves, what was necessary to put their children into the world, where they must work as their parents have done. Some few, by good luck, get a small farm, and save something; others get something from relations by legacies; others are supported by families whom they have served; some few others have children who succeed in the world better than ordinary, and are willing to help them: but the generality of this class, as they fail in strength, grow less and less able to save, nay, to support themselves, without being guilty of great imprudences. For my own part, I have observed in this country, a general unwillingness to come upon the parish, and people submit at last, usually, with great reluctance.

The love of home is both *natural* and *laudable*, and in the decline of life increases amazingly. One's own fire-side is an asylum; and the hurry, and squabbles, and peevishness of many poor old people together, is a most uncomfortable thing to the better disposed

disposed of them. I have seen so much of this, my dear Sir, that I must think it a very ill-natured thing and an *hardship*, to force an old person, or, perhaps, an old couple, from their own fire-side to the crowded one of a workhouse; especially if they have been *industrious* and *frugal*. People not very bad are so much better pleased with a morsel of their own, than a public one, that I am convinced, they will be maintained *contentedly* with less in their own cottages, than in a workhouse, where they *cannot work*. The greatest objection I could ever observe to this scheme is, that more fuel is consumed in many cottages than in one workhouse; and that many, instead of one house, are to be kept in repair. But we must consider, that in many parts of the kingdom, the ashes from peats, &c. are so useful to the husbandman, that he has almost an equivalent for the greater expence of fuel; and though old people want warmth, they are happier when croaking over an handful of fire in their own hut, so as to make a small quantity serve them; and the keeping poor-houses in repair, is a great encouragement to population. In short, I must, (till I see reasons hitherto unadvanced against my scheme) think, that the *frugal* and *industrious* poor should be *indulged* with a maintenance at home, as an encouragement to others to follow their example.

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It is, my dear Sir, a part of your scheme, to take into *houses of industry*, all children whom their parents cannot *well maintain* :— I doubt not but your intention is, that they should here have *proper care* and *education* : but how difficult is it in *practice*, however easy in *theory*, to secure this proper care? How wretched is the education of children in hospitals *in general*, and the several branches of the Foundling Hospital in particular? I mean not to decry those seminaries; I only mean to shew how great attention to children is requisite. After all is done, two things of great consequence must be wanting in that system of education, *viz.* the *parental tenderness* of those who take the superintendency of *weak childhood*, and the consequent tenderness of the children for the parents from whom they are snatched.

Let us ask our own hearts, my friend, how often we find even parental tenderness *scarce sufficient* to bear all the petulancies of children, and how often we lament the want of gratitude in those bred under our eye continually! — The care of the children of the poor is an object of the greatest national concern; but it is far from certain that it is best carried on in houses of industry. To conclude this head; it is good policy to indulge somewhat in favour of legitimate children, which illegitimate ones, foundlings at least, cannot have.

You,

You, Sir, make great and just complaints against tea-drinking. I make as great and just ones against *tobacco*, especially when *chewed*. It is pretended to assuage hunger, but it really exhausts the *saliva* which should aid digestion, and ruins the stomach, and becomes the cause of various distempers thence resulting, bringing on debility and immature old age, robs the country of the chewer's labour, and, in the last place, almost irresistibly tempts him to drinking of some kind; if of water, or other small liquors, occasions distempers, as fevers, agues, &c. if of strong, causes a frightful train of evils: — Yet, after all, impartial judges say, that tobacco when smoked, is necessary to carry off cold rheums, and as necessary as external fuel; and indeed the general, nay, almost universal practice of old people, who disliked the custom in youth or middle age, seems to plead for it. However, as it is evidently as *pernicious* in youth and middle age as *salutary* in old age, that custom should be abolished in the former cases, if possible; especially as it is an *unnatural* one, and always disagreeable at first. A fine, which would be sufficient to check it, should be strictly levied by a parish-officer.

The expence of chewing or smoking is greater than can be easily imagined by those who have not calculated. We have in this country an old couple, to whom, though they live not with us, we allow two shillings

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and sixpence *per* week, and twenty shillings for fuel *per annum*. I am told that the tobacco costs about sixpence *per* week, at least; so that it amounts to nearly a third part more than the fuel. May not little farmers well complain when they contribute to 1 *l.* 6 *s.* *per annum* for this article, to people who wasted the stock of an excellent farm in luxuries, as these people actually have?

Before I conclude this letter on the poor, I must observe an abuse or two which cry aloud for amends. You will excuse my being particular on this head of the poor, because my honoured father* having been as active a justice for about thirty years, as the *stone* would allow him, I assisted him in these his severest fits, to execute his office, and have seen all the tricks both of overseers and poor.

The first abuse I have to complain of is, that people who are going to lay themselves on a parish, usually give away some little time before, their best goods to their children, &c. The couple mentioned above, gave a clock worth three pounds to one child, a bed worth as much to another, and so on. The law allows the parish-officers to seize and sell what the poor are possessed of when they throw themselves on the parish; but it should allow them to retake whatever is not sold *bona fide*, a certain time before they make themselves burdens.

* Thomas Comber, Esq;

The other abuse is much more difficult to be prevented, *viz.* the depositing money in trust for superfluous expences. However, as this is a fraud much more difficult to be prevented, when discovered, it should be severely punished.

You speak of the *partiality* of *justices*. God knows, there is too much reason for such complaints in many parts of the country. The regulation of the commission is a matter of the highest importance. I will speak my sentiments freely. I am of the commission for this populous and extensive riding, and, by the circumstances above-mentioned, well acquainted with the practice; and yet for reasons which seem to me the *strongest*, do not chuse to act. I am, *therefore*, likely to be a *competent* and *impartial* judge, as I cannot be supposed partial in favour of those with whom I do not act, nor against them, as not being excluded from the commission. If the commission be properly regulated, I am so far from thinking that this necessary magistrate is trusted with *too much power*, that I am well convinced that he is not entrusted with *sufficient* to answer the many great purposes of his institution in those times. But then, as I would have none but *wise* and *good* and *dispassionate* men in the commission, and these encouraged by honours, and their involuntary mistakes passed over; so, on the other hand, if *foolish*, *bad*, and *passionate* men must be inserted in the commission, I

would have them severely punished for the first instance of *partiality*, and rendered incapable of ever acting again.

Upon the whole, I have thought, my dear Sir, much on this subject, and am persuaded that our *poor laws* will never answer the intention, till the poor rates are assessed on the whole people, in proportion to property, without distinction of parishes. Then all litigation, all settlements with their train of frauds, partiality, &c. vanish, and no body but the lawmen will suffer.

I am, dear Sir, with much affection,
yours, &c.

THOMAS COMBER.

P. S. In your strictures on justices, you do not mention, as *pests of society*, their clerks; a set of dirty wretches, who encourage litigation to increase their fees, and take *presents* to obtain *favour*, and stifle *evidence*. No *fees* whatever should be allowed, and the accepting of any *present* should be recompensed with the pillory. These *harpies* are detestable to every lover of his country who knows them.

To the F A R M E R.

Letter the Twelfth.

Dear Sir,

A *S*population has been made justly the great object of your thoughts through your letters; nothing could be in you more proper, than “to consider of some means of promoting marriage amongst the lower people.”

You have very justly shewn, that though *Augustus's* laws against celibacy prove the *Roman* empire on the decline; yet the difference betwixt the *Roman* empire then, and the *British* now are very great; and besides that, the impossibility of doing all we wish in any distemper, is no good reason for neglecting all relief.

You have further shewn, that the supposed parallel of laws to encourage agriculture, is indeed no parallel, and must be esteemed one of the capricious of that celebrated, but paradoxical writer, *Rousseau*.

In the words of plain truth, wise laws to encourage both *marriage* and *agriculture*, may be reasonably supposed to have a considerable effect, though much less in some cases than in others. The premium will often actually enable a man to engage with
reason-

reasonable hope, both in matrimony and agriculture, which without it he could not; and a more absurd paralogism was never advanced than his, who says, that in any case, where are encouraging and discouraging causes on the opposite side of any other undertaking, the encouraging ones must be condemned, because they will not have so great effects, as if they were not counteracted in a certain degree by the discouraging ones.

And here let me observe, dear Sir, how closely connected the promotion of marriage is with that of agriculture. The moment a simple rustic engages in matrimony, he must think of the advantages, the necessity of improvements in agriculture, whence he is to derive competence, nay, comfort. On the other side, if he engage in improvements of agriculture, he will instantly be inclined to marriage, as by this means he will have a wife and children to assist him in such improvements, and share in the enjoyment of them.

You have observed, that your proposed alteration of the poor laws, would promote marriage; and I have shewn that our present laws, well-executed, provide one encouragement to marriage, *viz.* a comfortable dwelling; and that another should be provided, *viz.* liberty of fixing where the labourer can best earn his bread.

I must add, that my proposal of making the provision for the poor a *national* one, not confined

confined to *particular* parishes, would greatly facilitate both these, and many other encouragements to matrimony.

You wisely observe, that "marriage will ever flourish, where there is no danger of children proving an incumbrance." And you rightly observe, that *certainly* the marriage state should be rendered "more easy than it is at present among the lower people, and if possible, make a large family be of no inconsiderable value to the father of it." This relief should certainly be given out of the *national stock*, as children are the *national riches*; and if the poor-tax was collected as I propose, it would be no difficult matter to give this relief properly, and even to make the children valuable to their poor parents, to whom they are now too oft an intolerable burden.

You mention the examples of *Colbert* and *Turbilly* very justly; and, in your Northern Tour, you do justice to some of our gentlemen who attempt something of the same kind. Even those who disapprove of the conduct of Sir *J. Lowther* in the character of a senator, must allow, that his provision of dwellings, &c. for his marrying dependants, is noble; and if gentlemen engaged in improvements of agriculture, attend to imitate this example, they will soon find the benefit, not only to the public, but themselves.

My profession of divinity leads me strongly to join you as a *politician* in this reform.

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And here I must hazard a few reflections on the proper treatment of those who have *natural children*. The murder of our own infants is a crime *nearly*, if not *equally* shocking as that of *suicide*. Both are shamefully common in this unhappy land. Mothers can never be tempted to murder their infants but by fear of *poverty* or *shame*. With regard to the latter, the task of the politician is *singularly delicate*. If he contributes to break and throw away the bonds of shame, he encourages lewdness with all its direful train, and discourages marriage, the only genuine source of private and public happiness. If he increases the weight of *shame*, which usually attends having a bastard, or increases the temptation to avoid that shame, by murdering the infant, he should, however, take care, that *poverty*, or the difficulty of providing for children, should never tempt any parent to destroy them.

In short, the guilt of the crime of murdering infants, is more chargeable on the legislator, than is usually thought of. If he properly encouraged marriage, people would have *legitimate* instead of *illegitimate* children, and instead of being tempted by *shame* to destroy them, would be encouraged by honours; and if women, delivered from the terror of poverty and *shame*, would have bastards and murder them, the legislature should make the conviction more easy, if it can
be

be done *, and the magistrate should punish them severely, that a greater *terror* and *shame* might conquer the less. At present the law makes *conviction* over difficult, and magistrates pique themselves on what they call *mercy*, which is real *cruelty*, after conviction. In short, the mothers of illegitimate children fairly produced, should be treated gently ; the mothers of legitimate ones with tenderness and honour, and supplied with comforts.

Nothing, dear Sir, can be more just, wise, and humane, than your urging, on every fair occasion, the cultivation of all our lands and wastes, and you are sure to find a friend and coadjutor in every man who is a *real friend* to his country. I cordially agree with you, that migrations to our colonies till our own land is sufficiently cultivated, is an absurdity, and a very pernicious one. Yet I am persuaded, that many of the heaths of *England*, &c. will never be cultivated, till the legislature interfere, not only to *permit*, but to

* The law seemed to have provided *effectually* for this, by putting the proof that the child is born *dead*, on the mother ; but then the proof that the child was born at all of her, is put on the prosecutor, and is sometimes, nay frequently, impossible, in a *judicial way*. The woman confesses she had the child ; but she adds, that she had it born *dead*. You must take the confession in the whole or not at all, and she escapes. How oft are children unavoidably murdered in the bearing for want of a midwife ! How often destroyed in the womb !

encourage, nay compel, in a certain degree, to it.

I will not enter into a discussion of the best means of preserving the dependence of your colonies on the mother country. It is a subject of great importance and delicacy. The avowed friends of liberty are the friends of the colonies.

But no man of sense and impartiality will, I think, deny, that the methods of hindering the colonies from interfering with our manufactures, must be gentle ones; and such as may make it their interest to apply themselves to other branches of business; and I apprehend, that you have mentioned some very proper ones, *viz.* ship-building, working iron-mines, planting vineyards, and forming silk manufactories.

We hear tragical complaints every day in the public papers of the decay of oak in *England*, and the apparent sad consequences to our navy, and all the great interests thereon dependent. But I smile at these tragic exclamations, as the effects of *ignorance*, or somewhat worse. Though the quantity of oak timber may, upon the whole, decay greatly in some parts of *England*, it is far from being a good conclusion, that it does so in all *England*; and while we can have a sufficient quantity in our colonies, it is far from being a clear matter, that the decay of timber in *England* is a disadvantage. The growth of wood is so inconsistent with the improvements of agriculture
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in many species, that sometimes the decay of timber may be an advantage, and a great one on the whole.

Whoever wishes to see this matter fully discussed, will find it so in the valuable collections of Mr. *Houghton*.

The introduction of fir timber for various purposes, has made that of oak much less valuable; and as to what is pretended of a proof of the decay of timber from the advanced price of bark, as we have been told in the public papers, it is all precarious, and probably inserted to answer some particular purposes in trade. We hear in these papers, of an advance of one-third in the price of bark since the last year; but we hear of no such advance in our own county, where much bark is prepared, and much leather is tanned. There *may*, however, and *ought* to be a considerable advance in its price, as leather sells remarkably dear, and bark has sold remarkably low; so that this advance may not arise from the decay of oak.

May we once see our waste lands cultivated, and we shall be able, with corn, woollen manufactures, &c. to buy oak wherever it is to be found. He has narrow notions of *political strength* who thinks that the strength of the navy of any nation depends on the growing of oak. Various other causes give the dominion of the seas, and while *Great Britain* possesses those advantages, she need not fear the navies of *France* and *Spain*, though she had not a single

oak in *England* or *Scotland*. That we may never want those advantages in this department which we now enjoy, is the hearty prayer of, dear Sir, yours and his country's sincere servant,

THOMAS COMBER.

P. S. With regard to your *Silva*, I have nothing to observe at present, except on one single point, viz. the proposal of dispatching a proper person to make the tour of *Europe*, to make a collection of the various states of agriculture throughout it; that I know nobody except yourself, from whom we can reasonably expect the performance of it; and from you (with an improvement in modern languages) we may, if the Society of Arts, &c. to which you belong, will properly support you.

To the FARMER.

Letter the Thirteenth.

Dear Sir, London, July 20th, 1770.

IT was impossible for me to see stuck up in the window of every bookseller in this metropolis, "The Deserted Village, a poem, by Dr. *Goldsmith*," without having so strong a curiosity as immediately to fly to the perusal of it.

I need not say to you, Sir, who must have perused it, that I there found all those beauties of descriptive poetry, with which that amiable writer is well known to abound.

I can truly say with the Doctor, after a little change or softening of his *expression*, not *sense*, to *poetry*,

"Source of my finest bliss and keenest woe ;"

I can join with him in all his declamation against *luxury* in general, and its species in cities in particular; I am in concert with him against all such monopolizers of enormous farms as to desolate a country, or even a village:—But though I love poetry with all the ardour which is due to an handmaid, I must not, cannot forget that she is only a handmaid, and ought not to be more; and that the great mistress of both Dr. *Goldsmith* and myself

myself ought to be *truth*. If she is not so of the Doctor, I dare say it is because *poetry*, too gaily dressed, has dazzled, I had almost said *fascinated*, his eyes, and that he will be glad to have the gaudy lustre taken off, and by the help of those glasses which *reason* supplies, the genuine features of unadorned *truth* brought home to him.

It seems, by his own confession, in his dedication, that he has been assured by several of his *best* and *wisest* friends, and expects to be assured so by his patron too, that "the *depopulation* he deplores, is no where to be seen, and the disorders he laments, are only to be found in his own *imagination*." Notwithstanding, he assures his patron, that he sincerely believes what he has wrote to be true; nay, that he has taken all *possible* pains in his country excursions, for these four or five years past, to be certain of what he alleges.

My excursions through different parts of *England* have not been very bounded, and yours have been the most extensive of any man in *England*, I suppose with the *express* intention of seeing the state of the country with regard to population, and all relative to it.—Will you join the Doctor in his lamentations? No; certainly not.—As to the Doctor's excursions into *Ireland*, and particularly to *Auburn*, I or you (I suppose) can say nothing precisely on knowledge, as eye-witnesses; but in the close of this letter, I shall observe, that
if

if the fact, *viz.* " the desertion of villages" in *Ireland* be admitted, it is rather a proof of *increasing* than *decreasing* population, so far as we can judge from general principles, and not from a *few particular* instances.

But to come, dear Sir, to the main point on which I, you, and men of sense and observation must (I think) differ from Dr. *Goldsmith*, as to our own country, *England*, a country which must naturally be understood to be the *subject* of a poem published in *English* at *London*, without any appropriation to *Ireland*, there is not a plainer or *greater* truth, than that the *desertion* or *destruction* of villages is so far from being a proof of the ruin of the country, or *depopulation*, that it is an actual proof in point, as the lawyers say, of the direct contrary, *viz.* the *improvement* and *population* of the country, though it seems at first a *paradox*.

I need not explain this matter to you; but I will explain it to any one who waits for such proof, by reference to one instance, which proves the *general* case a million times better than the desolation of *Auburn*, in the language of Dr. *Goldsmith*, put into the toothless mouth of

" The sad historian of the pensive plain ;"

can prove the contrary proposition.

Let us, my friend, cast our eyes, or rather invite others to cast their eyes on *Kirkleatham*, the hourly improving seat of our honoured friend,

friend, (the friend of human kind) *Charles Turner*, Esq. Within four or five years last past, (the limits of *Dr. Goldsmith's* observation) here was a village, such an one as many thousands are yet to be seen in *England*, and I humbly suppose in *Ireland* too, the seat of *ignorance, idleness, and dirt.*

This village consisted of chiefly two classes of inhabitants, *viz.* the higher, who honoured themselves with the names of *farmers*, and the lower, who called themselves *labourers*. The *former*, besides the other disadvantages under which they laboured, felt several, which proceeded solely from their being crowded together in a village. Their farms lay *dispersed* and *intangled*, and, in general, *distant* from their habitation; so that they had the greatest *trouble* and *inconvenience* in conveying the fruits of their lands home, and conveying their manure back to the lands, and moving cattle, &c. from one field to another.

Our very intelligent friend, the proprietor of this village, has done what every man of sense should; he has, by composing *farms* of contiguous *lands*, *given*, I may say *created*, great advantages to every farmer. He has, in the next place, built nearly in the center of each farm, convenient farm-houses, out-houses, &c. so that the men and cattle go no idle steps, and are no longer tempted to suffer the manure to rot on the soil of the village, rather than be at the expence of the labour

labour of removing it to a *proper* but *distant* place.

Whatever is for the advantage of the farmer of a farm of moderate extent, (and such are all Mr. *Turner's*) must be for the advantage of the labourer who depends on him. In proportion to the higher culture which the farmer gives to his ground, will labour be, *cet. par.* as the mathematicians say; and therefore, at the same time that the present *labourers* will have much more constant employment and better wages than before the improvement, there will arise a breed of more labourers; not to herd together in some future *dirty* village, but to live separately and much more comfortably in cottages, placed on wastes near the respective farmers on whom they depend for employment and bread.—In view of this increased demand for labour, Mr. *Turner* has chosen and properly disposed of a considerable number of foundlings from the grand repository; and by their being happily out of the way of bad example, and by their conversing little with any persons but those of their respective masters families, they become *very* likely to rise good members of society, and, in their turn, masters and fathers of families; especially as Mr. *Turner* greatly encourages the marriages of the lower class.

From this just view of matters, we may safely conclude, that wherever we see one of the dirty, miserable old villages raise its loath-

some head, there is no real improvement, no population going forward : and on the contrary, that the *desertion* or *destruction* of a *village* is the strongest presumption of *improvement* and *population*.

I cannot, dear Sir, finish my survey of a *deserted village*, without noticing *one* or *two* *striking* objects in it, which Dr. *Goldsmith*, to answer the purpose of his painting at all, should, instead of *bringing* full to the eye, have hid under a group of trees. They are indeed very different, nay opposite objects, *viz.* the *alehouse* and the *parsonage*.

On the description of the former, Dr. *Goldsmith* has bestowed no less than two paragraphs, and thirty-nine verses. He has indeed, by the pencil of poetry, brushed it up so spruce, that we may justly say with *Virgil*,

“ —Miratur novas fondes, et non sua Roma.”

Such pictures ill-suit the alehouses of villages in *Old England*, however they may suit those of happier *Ireland* in days of yore. But be they as spruce as the Doctor pleases, alehouses in villages are the *seats*, the *seminaries* of every vice which can *corrupt* and *ruin* the people, and render useless the church. Here idleness, drunkenness, gaming, lewdness, cursing, &c. are *professed* and practised, —infomuch, that one of the most desirable circumstances of a rural neighbourhood, is not to *want*, and therefore not to *tolerate* an alehouse. If decent farmers are encouraged
by

by good landlords to that degree, as to be able to brew small beer and ale sufficient for their families and poor neighbours, which they will be able to do at a much cheaper rate than they can buy it at the alehouse, (almost half of the whole price) alehouses may, in thousands of parishes, be totally pulled down, as they ought, as some of the greatest nuisances,—and which, more than all others, render ineffectual the labours of the master of the *parsonage*, whose picture Dr. Goldsmith hath well drawn in the main, though he hath added some features which would more becomingly have been thrown into a shade.—The encouraging of strolling beggars is, in reality, the encouraging *idleness*, and almost every vice; and while such are *relieved* (as we too benignly call the *encouraging* of them) it is in vain that we *chide* their wanderings.—No wonder if such *ministers* of *vice* preach it up in the *alehouse*, if they are allowed to do it over the parson's fire! To *relieve* the *wretched*, however *wicked*, occasionally from hand to mouth, may be, in some cases, perhaps all, even laudable; but to take care that they shall be *relieved constantly* and *properly*, by those whom the law appoints, is a thousand times more laudable.

As I know not, Sir, of one *village deserted*, except in consequence of a system of *improvement*, I wonder why Dr. Goldsmith did not draw the consequences of such improvement on the clergyman's *mansion* and *environs*. Ex-

cept in cases of notorious oppression and fraud, the clergyman's tithes arise in proportion to the culture of the fields; and we might reasonably have hoped to see *innocent*, nay *laudable elegance* attend the good man's door;—whereas, on the contrary, he tells us, that the house is fallen; for he says, in such a place it *rose*!

Why the schoolmaster's *noisy mansion* too should fall in the general ruin of a *deserted village*, I see not; for since such village is *deserted* only that the country may be better inhabited in separate houses, the farmers, with their other improvements, will always carry on those of their children's education; and as sister arts thrive best together, *agriculture* will *require*, and well pay for a skill in the practical mathematics, mechanics, and be reciprocally advanced by their advance.

When I read, Sir, Dr. *Goldsmith's* exclamation;

——“ The man of *wealth* and *pride*
 “ Takes up a space that many *poor* supplied;
 “ Space for his lake, his parks extended bounds,
 “ Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;”

I cannot express my wonder, that so good a descriptive poet should have forgot what Mr. *Pope* long ago so happily and justly expressed, *viz.*

“ Yet hence the poor are cloth'd, the poor are fed;
 “ Health for himself, and for his children bread
 “ The lab'rer bears.” ———

Evidently,

Evidently, nothing can contribute so much to the convenience and comfort of the countryman, both farmer and labourer, as the great and rich man's choice to make his environs smile, and to promote a spirit of improvement throughout, which shall reach far beyond the pale of his park, nay, the boundary stone of his estate. I would mention a few shining examples which might shew *England* to be not inferior to *France* in her *Turbillys*, her *Chateauxvieux*. I could mention many; but I leave Dr. *Goldsmith* to look into your Tour, those faithful *registers* of the improving happiness of our dear country, to which you must greatly contribute, by making the examples more generally known.

I must not conclude without observing, that it is really astonishing, that a man of Dr. *Goldsmith's* genius and talents can remain a dupe to vulgar *prejudice*, after all that has been so clearly reasoned in favour of the inclosing of commons, under *proper regulations*: yet, that he is such a dupe, is most evident from the following lines:

- "Where then, ah! where shall *poverty* reside?
- "To 'scape the pressure of *contiguous pride*?
- "If to some common's fenceless limits stray'd,
- "He drives his flock to *pick* the *scanty blade*,
- "Those fenceless fields the *sons of wealth* divide;
- "And even the *bare-worn* common is *denied*."—

I have not, Sir, quoted these lines barely to shew that Dr. *Goldsmith* is a dupe to vulgar *prejudices*, but for a much better reason, *viz.*

to

to take occasion, in *humble prose*, to give an antidote against the alluring poison of *poetry*, distilled by *falsehood*.

He asks, in a complaining strain, where *poverty* with his *flock* shall reside? You and I will tell him; he may reside at the self-same spot as he has hitherto, with only this difference, that he will become *plenty*!

While he drives his *flock* to a *fenceless common*, they must pick such a *scanty blade*, as will scarce allow them or their master to live. He must not, he ought not (at least) to wonder that the *sons of wealth* deny him leave to *starve* on a *bare-worn common*, which is none of his, and can do him no good. If he will but be patient, he may soon see that these sons of wealth will, for their sake, soon fence and divide this common, and allow him such terms that his flock and he may both thrive, and he may find his *particular* good in the *public*.

I cannot forbear smiling at the picture Dr. *Goldsmith* draws of *England*:

“ ————E’er her griefs began,
“When every rood of ground maintain’d its man.”

In all the calculations which are made of the number of men which *England* can maintain, we have nothing like this, *viz.* four men to one acre.

In what archives does Dr. *Goldsmith* find this fact? In what happy æra was *England* thus *populous* and thus *cultivated*? It must surely

surely have been in the heroic times of *Arthur* or *Brute*.

You, Sir, have given us, in your Northern Tour, many striking accounts of the fruitfulness of potatoes; and if any author can prove that long ago, the culture of that excellent plant was as well known and practised as now; we may think, that in some places, this calculation might be true; if men lived on potatoes alone. But I know no other vegetable by whose produce on one-fourth of an acre, a stout man could be supported with every necessary for a whole year. Perhaps Dr. *Goldsmith* takes his ideas from the happier climate of *Ireland*, and applies them to her less fertile sister *England*. However, Dr. *Parnell*, whose life he has lately wrote, gives no such favourable account of the culture of *Ireland*, as to corn, when he assures us, that

“ *Half an acre’s crop was half a sheaf.*”

It is indeed no wonder that Dr. *Goldsmith* should talk of *desertion*, *destruction*, and *depopulation*, when he judges of plenty by a standard, to which our highest improvements in agriculture are by no means equal.

His description of an *Englishman* in that happy (I had almost said, *fabulous*) situation, is, however, curious.

“ For him *light labour* spread her wholesome store,
 “ Just gave what life requir’d, but gave no more.
 “ His best companions, *innocence* and *health*,
 “ And his best riches, *ignorance* of *wealth*.”

That

That labour which was necessary to cultivate a rood of ground, must have been *light indeed*, as he must have been *idle* almost all the time the crop was growing.

The Doctor is a better judge of what is *wholesome* than I can pretend to be; but if he means potatoes by the *wholesome store*, which is the product of the *light labour*, I believe his brethren, the physicians, will not allow them a *very wholesome* food, especially when joined with a *very sedentary* or *idle* life. He admits, however, that this kind of employment

“Just gave what life requir’d, but gave no more.”

Now I am much inclined to think, that a theory which promises only just what was necessary to retain body and soul in union, would in practice be found very liable, from a variety of causes and accidents, frequently not to give quite so much.

In short, Sir, I cannot become so serious a convert to Dr. *Goldsmith's* theory, as not to think that, in our present state of improvement, we may be much happier in *general*, if our people's labour will produce them, according to *all human probability*, considerably more than what will just sustain life, though their labour be not *so very light*; unless we can suppose that in cases of disappointment, by the ordinary means, men are to be supported by an extraordinary Providence, by *manna*, &c. from Heaven.

Dr.

Dr. *Goldsmith's* declaration of his long-nurs'd hopes to "die at home (at *Auburn*) at last," is very natural, and *very tender*, as coming from a poet prejudiced in favour of his native place. But surely, if *Auburn* is become a *deserted village*, in consequence of the general improvement of the country, (and I can conceive no other reason) Dr. *Goldsmith* will find it a more agreeable retreat on this very account.—And when he comes

"Amidst the swains to shew his book-learn'd skill,"

if he have acquir'd a few *more rational* notions of just policy, he will not be the *less agreeable*, or *less instructive* companion.

These reflections, Sir, on a very pleasing poem of a justly-admired descriptive poet, are so closely connected with the subject-matter of the *Farmer's Letters*, that I could not restrain my pen from thus expressing them to you, to whom I am a sincere friend,

THOMAS COMBER.

P. S. Allow me to wish, that a descriptive genius, like Dr. *Goldsmith*, would give us the reverse of the medal. A picture of an *improved*, a cultivated country, would shine in the majesty of *Miltonics*.

F I N I S.